

Lichen Pole Cocktail Cool

One of Wellington band Lichen Pole's more unusual gigs was an unplugged set at vocalist Broc Oliver's parents' twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in rural Taranaki. Apparently it went down a treat with the old timers, suggesting that if the rock thing doesn't work out, there may be a future for Lichen Pole on the cabaret circuit. "We know what's involved," says Broc. "We know a few Elvis covers. It'd probably be quite good money."

Lichen Pole have just released their debut CD, the tastily named cocktail of sound *Ebola Cola*. Like fellow capital bands Breathe and Short, Lichen Pole completely financed and coordinated the release of the CD themselves.

Broc — whose vocals range from an antipodean drone to a loopy half rap somewhere between Les Claypool and Mark E Smith — says releasing the CD has taken a lot of time and organisation.

The seven song sampler (which has been released on the Lichen Pole-created label Immune) has an eclectic mix of styles, bringing together the four members' various musical backgrounds. Half the band were previously in goth-industrial group Devoid, but this doesn't often come through in Lichen Pole's sound, which is a lot less dark and much chirpier.

As for the pleasant title, Broc says it comes from "the idea of disease meeting refreshment... oh, and it sounds kinda cool."

DOMINIC WAGHORN



Breathe Happy Progress

Pet Johnson, bassist for Wellington band Breathe, is grinning so hard I feel for his cheek muscles.

"I haven't been this happy in a long time," he says. Keyboardist Steve Gallagher is just as jovial. "I just can't believe how happy I am."

Who's been handing out the happy pills? Well, actually, their high spirits are of the natural kind. Breathe have just released their self-financed debut EP, *Things Like These* and it is selling well throughout the country. Their brooding, melodic pop songs are being heard on most campus stations and also, more surprisingly, on some of the more forward thinking commercial stations (The Box in Wellington has had the EP's closing track, the insanely catchy 'Divetower' on high rotation). The real reason for the happy vibe, though, is that as a band, Breathe are currently more focused and unified than they've ever been. No wonder they're smiling.

Breathe have been together for about a year and a half. In that time they have built up quite a following in the capital, partly due to their high profile support slots for bands like

Pavement and Shihad.

Last October they went into a studio, and with the help of Phil Knight from Shihad, recorded five of their earlier songs. Because of a lack of money, these songs have only now been released in the form of *Things Like These*.

Consequently, the songs on the EP are a testament to how Breathe sounded last year, and not so much how they are now. "To us, it does sound dated," says Pet, "but we see it as a stamp of how we were sounding last year. We've got more of a driving sound now, and I think we've progressed individually on our instruments."

With something on disc to wave around, Breathe have begun to approach labels in the hope of finding backing for an album. There has been some interest, but as yet, nothing definite. Pet says if a label doesn't come to the party, they will record the album themselves. Releasing it, however, would mean saving, saving, saving.

"Which would mean it could be another five months before we get it out," says Pet.

DOMINIC WAGHORN

FUTURE RECORDINGS

Alice in Chains, *Tripod* (Columbia).

Neil Young, *Live in Dublin* (Epic) — features tracks with Vedder-less Pearl Jam — March.

Tom Petty, *Playback* (MCA) — 6-CD box set, 92 songs, 27 previously unreleased, 84 page booklet.

John Coltrane, *Stellar Regions* (Impulse!) — unreleased recordings.

Rolling Stones, *Stripped* (Virgin) — unplugged set.

Ozzy Osbourne, *Ozmosis* (Epic).

The Rentals, *Return of the Rentals*

(Maverick / Warners) — moog driven 70s new wave tunes from Weezer bassist Matt Sharp.

Sugar, *Besides* (Rykodisc) — 70 min, 17 b-sides & rarities.

Cowboy Junkies, *200 More Miles* (BMG) — live.

Living Colour, *Hits* (Epic).

Brian Wilson & Van Dyke Parks, *Orange Crate Art* (Warners) — new collaboration by the *Smile* pair.

Menswear, *Nuisance* (Polygram).

Pulp, *A Different Class* (Polygram).

Happy Mondays, *Loads* — Best Of.

Mick Harvey, *Intoxicated Man* (Mute) — sings the songs of Serge Gainsbourg.

Six Finger Satellite, *Severe Exposure* (Sub Pop).

Meat Puppets, *No Joke* (Polygram).

Quincy Jones, *Q's Jook Joint* (Warners) —

Jones' guests include Babyface, Coolio, Bono, R.Kelly, Queen Latifah, Phil Collins, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder etc.

P.M. Dawn, *Jesus Wept* (Polygram).

Steely Dan, *Alive in America* (Giant / BMG).

Porno For Pyros, *Good Gods* — *Urge* (Warners).

Nick Cave, *Murder* (Mute) — January.

Anthrax, *Stomp 442* (Elektra).

Fleetwood Mac, *Time* (Warners).

Big Mountain, *Resistance* (Giant).

Cranberries, *Doors & Windows* (Island) — interactive CD release.

Don Henley, *Actual Miles* (MCA) — hits, 2 new songs.

Ruby, Salt Peter (Creation / Sony)

Kiss, *MTV Unplugged* (Mercury).

Jah Wobble & Eno, *Heaven & Hell* (Polygram).

The Amps, *Empty Glasses* (4AD).

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