



Higher Than the Nun

"Nice young boys" is how Flying Nun Records describe their spanking new signing, the Dunedin three-piece HDU (High Dependency Unit).

Deano on drums, Neil on bass, and singer/guitarist Tristan had already played together, in different incarnations of different bands, when they got together again in a practice room in March 1994. They decided to ditch their past dalliances with 'pop' sounds, rigid structures, and vocal melodies, and Deano says the result, "turned out to be exactly what the three of us were after".

After two months spent "jamming", HDU ventured outside the garage, and played a year of support shows, including gigs in Auckland with the Headless Chickens and Cake Kitchen, that brought them to the attention of various bods at Flying Nun.

Once given the nod, the band flew to Auckland last September, and spent eight days making their *Abstinence Acrimony* EP in a rehearsal room in Cook Street.

The four song recording is a moody collection of wild, buzz-saw guitars, sharp, com-

plex rhythms, and tortured vocals. But most of all, with the EP, HDU have delivered a set of songs that appear to have almost written themselves — a musical stream of consciousness. Though Deano explains, in a round about way, that HDU believe they can pull it off.

"It all depends on the type of music you're playing. If you're creating something that's basis is in improvisation, then it's fine to do as much as you think is appropriate."

The threesome tour the North Island this month to promote the *Abstinence Acrimony* EP, before returning to the deep South, where much more bizarre things tend to happen at their gigs. Particularly in Invercargill.

"It was interesting. The actual show was great, we had a really good turn out, and the people were really supportive. But a fight broke out at the bar, and I later learned that some guy had his ear bitten off. Pretty crazy."

Flying Nun will release the track 'Abstinence' as a seven inch single simultaneously with the EP, while HDU are due to record an album for the label early next year.

JOHN RUSSELL



Trash

One Out of the Can

You could search for many a day to find an average man in the street familiar with the antics of Dunedin outfit Trash, but the Southern noise peddlers certainly turned a few ears several years back with the student radio 'hits' 'On and On with Lou Reed' and 'Telecom South'.

Last month the trio of Bruce Blucher (guitar/vocals), Robbie Yeats (drums), and Paul Cahill (guitar) released their third long player *Mihiwaka*, recorded in a total of 50 hours at Dunedin's Volt Studio.

The make-it-up-as-you-go-along-approach Trash take to guitar playing will make most pop fans dive for cover. The 13 minute long, grating extravaganza entitled 'Paper', and the sparse, spoken word endurance test of 'Small Fried Thing' in particular, are mighty dastardly — the aural equivalent of poking your tongue out for 10 minutes.

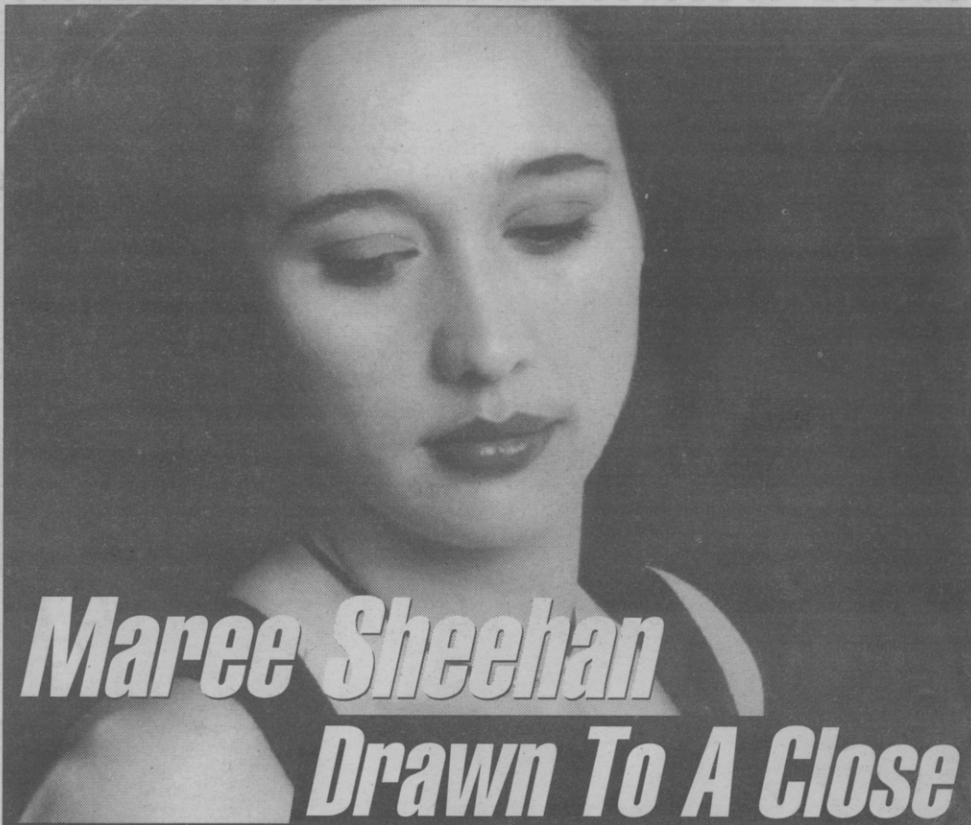
Blucher: "We decided to go in the studio without any set format, so it was all pretty much written in there, and that's why it sounds like it does. It's the direction we've been taking anyway. We've been taking a lot

more chances, having a lot more fun with it, not trying to be so formalised."

Trash make a return trip to North America early next year to promote *Mihiwaka*, after a brief tour in September 1993, on the campaign trail for their debut, *Gritts And Butts*. Blucher says the band sell a great deal more records in the USA, and are therefore quite happy to remain less than a household name here at home.

"It's not a problem. The population here is so tiny, there's only going to be a certain amount of people who enjoy what we do, and that's the way it's always been. Trash are a pretty low-key outfit, we've all got other things to do in our lives. Perhaps if we'd decided early on to 'go for it', and toured heaps around New Zealand, and hooked up a record company that could've given us the big push, then it might have been different. But we're not really interested in that side of rock 'n' roll anyway. It is important to us and we're keen to get on with it, but we also value our other lives."

JOHN RUSSELL



Maree Sheehan

Drawn To A Close

In the unruly world of show business, plans don't always go according to plan. For irrefutable proof, just ask Maree Sheehan. For well over two years she's been waiting to launch her debut album, but several setbacks have delayed the arrival of Drawn In Deep, until now. With a new record label providing a jump-start, during the past six months all Sheehan's goals have come to fruition.

Born in Christchurch, Sheehan was never really interested in the piano lessons her parents insisted she take as a child. It wasn't until her teens, when she began writing poetry and building tunes around the words, that she began to approach music with something more than reluctance.

Sheehan enrolled on an 18 month Polynesian Performing Arts course where she recorded her first demo. She says the skills she learnt there remain invaluable to this day.

"That's where I learnt the basics of writing music, and those will always continue to be with me. If I didn't have that, I probably wouldn't be where I am now."

After graduating, Sheehan made the decision to make music her career. She left her home town in November 1991, and shifted north to Auckland.

"I decided if I was going to get anywhere in music, I had to be in Auckland because that's where the industry was. That first year in Auckland was pretty hard. I didn't know anybody and I was going on a dream, an ideal that I wanted to do music."

In January the following year, Sheehan was invited to join the now defunct, Black Katz. Playing drums in the band was former Wellingtonian Neil Cruickshank, who at the time of Sheehan's arrival was toying with the idea of starting a Maori record label. Sensing an opportunity, Cruickshank signed Sheehan, and two months later her debut single, 'Make You My Own', became the first release on Tangata Records.

A string of singles followed over the next twelve months, including the divine 'Fatally Cool', while simultaneously, Sheehan was recording songs for an album at various studios around Auckland. But somewhere along the line it all went sour, and although Sheehan won't discuss the details, she says she felt continually second-guessed by Tangata until her departure from the label in November 1994.

"With Tangata Records... we just didn't see eye to eye about what was going to happen with me as an artist. I don't think they really believed in me as much as I needed them to, financially, and as an artist, and as a writer."

In the interim, Sheehan was snapped up by the Auckland branch of Australian based label Roadshow Music.

"In some ways I felt like I had to start all

over again to prove myself to this new record company, and I think people out there were like: 'When is she ever going to put out an album?' But this year things have moved so quickly with Roadshow, and the album's done."

Drawn In Deep was recorded in eight weeks during July and August, in Sydney, with Aussie producer Peter Martin at the controls. Though Sheehan is undoubtedly happy with the result of her partnership with Martin, she says, she was initially more than slightly wary.

"I had to work with a producer who would take in my ideas. It's too important to me to allow somebody that just knows me, to take over and control my musical creativity, and the way I write and sing. Peter's an older man, and he's a Pakeha, and I'm the complete opposite to him — I'm Maori, I'm a woman, and I'm young. So it was like, are we gonna get on, are we gonna be going to be able to make good music together? We were just lucky that we did, and I feel that finally my voice has been produced the way I've always wanted it."

Sheehan believes *Drawn In Deep* solidifies just exactly what her 'sound' is. Previous singles have leapt from soul grooves, to hip-hop beats, to dance rhythms, whereas the album on a whole presents a more focussed, unified feel.

"I was experimenting a lot when I was with Tangata, now I think I've matured so much, and found what is my music. It's a process of finding yourself, and what you want to be, and what you want to sound like. I'm aiming this album at a maturer audience, and I want it to be a stayer, I don't want it to come in and go out."

Another aspect of Sheehan's new-found sense of self reckoning, is her decision not to take past criticisms regarding her non-political stance on board with this album.

"There are times when it can be really difficult for a female in the industry, but I'm not really a crusader. I think there are a lot of people out there who think Maree Sheehan should be writing in the reo, and she should be using certain political points of views. For awhile I did start asking myself the same questions, but now I've decided I'm not here to write music for other people or other people's opinions. In the end it's me who has to live with it."

JOHN RUSSELL

k.d lang



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