

# REALLY SOMETHING

Challenge has been a key factor in NRA's development over the years and they certainly rise to the occasion with the release of their second album *Hold On To Your Face*, a further step into the dance arena. HOTYF is a sophisticated blend of dance rhythms, samples, gnarly guitars and dark words. The cover artwork is definitely *in your face* and indicative of what's in store for the listener.

Finding Rex Visible (vocals, guitar, sampler) is easy. He's once again holed up at Incubator Studios producing the new Headless Chickens album and a little anxious as he ponders over an upcoming dentist appointment to remove a wisdom tooth. ("yeah, I'm pre-valium at the moment"). That aside, recording HOTYF at Incubator Studios last year was no easy stint as NRA experienced line-up changes and mastering the technology involved *and* in a brand new studio.

"As a whole it was almost a nightmare to do. The studio was still coming together really. It was hard to work out when we were going to start. It was changing all the time, gib board walls, pretty crude."

Eventually the band recorded late August '90 through to mid-Jan '91.

"The result is really good for what we worked with and the amount of money involved. We stuffed around in the early part so the end of it was a bit frantic. I locked myself in that room for two months — didn't come out for Xmas and New Year. It was pretty bizarre."

As to (it seems) the ever changing line-up of NRA, the recording and touring have gelled into a unit of five members. Rex and longtime NRA drummer Snag Sweeney and bass player Joost are joined by Eddiewardo (vocals, guitar, sampler) and newest member Fiona McDonald (vocals, keyboards).

Says Rex of this: "It's been good having Ed playing the guitar. He's brought in new ideas and tastes. It's an ever expanding unit. Hopefully it will stay solid for a while." We're turning into quite a strong posse of knowledge, it's working well."

Also the inclusion of a permanent female voice will no doubt change NRA's sound and style.

"Fiona has joined fulltime and will be onstage all the time. It's good having another lyric and melody writer as well as a good singer."

Fiona is also a member of the Straw People (featuring lately on their single 'Blue') as well as doing guest spots for the Headless Chickens. And while we're on the subject of the sharing of band members Joost and Ed team up as Nemesis Dub Systems and have played support for NRA plus their own gigs. How does all this band swapping work out for everyone?

"The main problem, at least with the Chickens and NRA, is we can't play at the same time," says Rex. "One band has a spell and another band has a spell. It's not a problem in a lot of ways cos you can only play so much in New Zealand. We work it out so we can work it in. At least with our albums they're gonna be a wee while apart so that means that both bands can promote albums. It's good in other ways cos we sorta know what's happening and the technology pool is large... and



N.R.A. (L-R) Rex Visible, Snag Sweeney, Eddiewardo and Joost.

we're all mates."

On the new album there are eight tracks including the single 'Bruce McLaren', the fastest track or should I say raciest one. So who's FM?

"Bruce is a famous Kiwi racing car driver. I don't really know much about him though," he laughs. "The songs are not about BM. BM is a good title about something about a racing car. It's more of a chant, it's hard to get away from the screaming cars on it. The rap thing at the end is from the announcers P.O.V. That happened after a review of us in the *Herald* and his last statement was Headless Chickens and JPSE better rise to the

challenge, so with the rap (see above) it's just a bit of stupidity that we thought we'd include — a good bit of humour."

Of the other tracks, 'Rules' and 'Big Nose' are particularly strong. There's also a revamped version of 'Glitch' with Ed taking over vocals previously sung by Peter Hannevelt.

"Peter decided to leave the band quite early into the album and we had already sussed Ed out to play so we decided a couple of songs Peter had done vocals for to actually swap while we had the chance to be more current to what we're doing now."

The last track on side two is all samples and no singing and the most

experimental of all.

"Yeah, there's a bit of Janet (Jackson) in there. Most of the stuff I use I get off the TV. Bits of incidental music about half a second of it. Anything at all, just a bit of music then you twist it around to suit your own means."

With the popularity of independent/crossover dance music I wonder if NRA identifies with any of it.

"We're sort of using untold different styles and mulch it all up and spit it out our own way. We always seem to hold a harder edge on things in our own weird way."

So following on the release of HOTYF the band will have good quality product to take with them when they venture overseas with the Headless Chickens and Nemesis Dub Systems around October this year. It's probably a good thing that they're all mates. They plan to tour England, Europe taking in Germany, Holland and perhaps Paris then over to the States for shows in Houston and New York. A week will be spent in New York as part of the College Music Jamboree with emphasis on college radio contacts and audiences dealing more with independent bands.

"Basically it's bands who want to break into the college network in the States versus the New Music Seminar (earlier in the year) which is record company showcasing their

bands. We're not quite on that level of record co here in NZ. We'll be showcasing to people who are more likely to buy and listen. And the support of college radio in America increases the chance of bands getting signed to labels over there and we're not gonna get that unless we go," says Rex. Then it's over to sunshiney West Coast with visits to LA and San Francisco finishing off their travels.

"It's the get your face out there and kick people in the butt tour."

Meanwhile NRA will be kicking off their own NZ tour late June playing material from the album as well as new songs. I ask Rex who's coming along to the gigs these days?

"A lot of people who have always come to see us. There was a period there where people didn't like the change I think. But that seems to have all gone by now and most people don't mind either way. It's exciting playing to a whole lot of people that you've never played to before. Even supporting the Mission was good for playing to a great big crowd of goths at the town hall."

(laughs).

And yes, Rex still enjoys heckling the audience.

"I like to be rude in a humorous way."

Check them out at their record release party June 1st at Surge Niteclub.

LISA VAN DER AARDE

## CDs

A new CD **Doors** reissue package is the 2-CD set *In Concert* with over two hours of digitally remastered tracks from their deleted live albums *Absolutely Live*, *Alive She Cried* and *Live at the Hollywood Bowl*. There's also one previously unreleased live track 'The End'.

In 1992 a definitive **Doors** boxed set is planned and *American Prayer* will appear on CD.

New Polygram mid-price CDs are **James Brown** *Live at the Apollo 2*, **Graham Parker** *Parkerella & Howlin' Wind*, **Arthur Brown** *The Crazy World of Arthur Brown*, **Georgie Fame** *20 Beat Classics*, **Black Uhuru** *Sinemilla*

and **Lindesfarne** *Back & Forth*.

WEA mid-price CD reissues include **Zapp** *Zapp*, *Performance* movie soundtrack, **Little Walter** *Best of Vol. 2*, **John Lee Hooker** *Never Get Out of These Blues Alive*, **Bonnie Raitt** *Sweet Forgiveness*.

**Frank Zappa** reissues on Rykodisc CDs (via Festival) are *Thing-Fish*, *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar*, *Uncle Meat*, *Jazz From Hell*, *Freak Out*, *Ruben & the Jets*, *Hot Rats*, *Absolutely Free*, *Waka / Jawaka*, *One Size Fits All*, *Bongo Fury*, *Broadway the Hardway*, *Grand Wazoo*, *Them Or Us*, *Meets the Mothers of Invention*, *We're Only in It For the Money / Lumpy Gravy*, *Apostrophe / Overnite Sensation*, and live albums *You Can't Do That on Stage Vol. 1*, *2 & 3*, *London Symphony Orchestra*.

**HEART of DARKNESS**

*the long walk*

|           |                               |
|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 17th May  | OHOPÉ BEACH RESORT, WHAKATANE |
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| 24th May  | OCEANSIDE, MOUNT MAUNGANUI    |
| 25th May  | PLAINS HOTEL, EDGE CUMBE      |
| 20/31 May | QUALITY INN, ROTORUA          |
| 7th June  | CAR PARK, WELLINGTON          |
| 8th June  | ZACS, HAWERA                  |
| 14th June | OTUMOETAI TRUST TAURANGA      |
| T.B.A.    | NEW PLYMOUTH                  |
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