

Def Sound

As the public becomes more and more jaded by rap, the genre answers back by becoming more and more diverse. Do we seriously need any more gangsta raps or hippy-hop combos? Not at all, the ones we already have will do fine, what we need though, are a few acts who are going to make us do a musical double take, who are, in the lingo of the genre, "fresh."

This is where Definition of Sound enter into the scheme of things, for they are undeniably fresh. They come from a background of British hiphop, having been involved in a range of mildly successful acts like Top Billin', but none of this matters too much as its their present two man incarnation that's causing the noise. They combine all the good bits of rap, dance and reggae music, toss in a little funk and a healthy dose of 60's pop, and somehow make it all sound fun. It's little wonder they don't like being classed as just a rap act, even when their rapping is as good as it is. So what exactly are they? The Don gives us a definition of Definition of Sound.

"When we said we weren't rap it was because we wanted people to class us as just music rather than as a rap album because there's as much singing as rapping, and its not exactly a hardcore album. When we

rap, we don't exactly rap in your face, it's more like a conversation than us expressing ourselves in any real aggressive way, it's more speaking to you than at you." *Love and Life* has a decidedly British feel to it, in that it isn't a straight take on American rap, it's a very American musical form, but just approached in a different manner.

"The difference between what we're doing and more traditional American stuff is that we're maybe not afraid to utilize our influences or to tell everyone about what we're into, we're using more styles of music than just rap."

Which is a very valid comment, as like a lot of the cutting edge British dance stuff, there's strong evidence of the huge resurgence in popularity that reggae is experiencing. It's always been hugely popular in England, and is now starting to really permeate through all sorts of music.

"Sound system music is basically where me and Kevin came from musically. The album's got a real reggae vibe on it because of the way we use the bassline, we take the bassline very seriously and basically that's the only thread running through the album because we use so many different styles."

The Don isn't kidding about the different areas they draw from, there's most everything you could imagine bouncing round in here, and some more beside.

"It's like on the album there's only maybe nine samples. We use the samples less than we make up our own drum patterns or basslines, so we just use samples like another instrument. We do use those samples to the max though, and 'Gloria' was something we had wanted to use for a while so we had to fit it in somewhere."

Probably the most suprising element of the whole album is the use of a major sixties feel, from Them samples to Merseybeat styled organs and guitars laid over serious dance beats.

"I think I could blame my parents for that, 'cause that's the stuff they used to listen to when I was younger, and listening to the radio or watching *Top of the Pops* I picked up on it too, I could sing advert jingles or T.V. themes quite happily. It's just



remembering influences I guess."

Lyrical Definition of Sound are just as sharp as musically, they avoid the usual 'my dick is soooo big and I've just shot my whole family' cliches that so often trip up British rappers along with the bad American accents. These boys keep things simple and realistic.

"When we write we just write spontaneously for that actual moment, whatever we've just

experienced is what we write about. Guns and gold chains and fast cars is not exactly what we're experiencing over here, it's not exactly an everyday occurrence. I can understand it from an American point of view, but here in England it's not realistic, so we write about what we see, just the spur of the moment."

This approach is something that is becoming more and more common in the cutting edge of British dance

music with the likes of Massive and Rebel MC producing albums that are superbly listenable and distinctively original, an honest to god renaissance seems to be under way.

"The reason I think is that music always seems to regurgitate itself on the British scene, like when rock'n'roll came out, you had the Beatles later feeding rock'n'roll music back to America and the world in a slightly different form. The British music scene just takes from the rest of the world then puts it back changed a little, and it seems to come out pretty well. I think it's 'cause England is so calm and relaxed, it's not got such a hype scene going on, it's a bit more reserved and we take a bit more time on things."

And will this scene continue to develop?

"Yeah, I think it can only continue to get bigger because there's so many bands doing different things, there's us doing our style, Massive doing what they're doing, but also people like the Young Disciples who are stronger on a jazz trip and lots of others like MC Mello, and there's all different directions and styles, so it can only get bigger and better."

And the Definition of Sound? Well, when it sounds this good why bother defining? just enjoy it. **KIRK GEE**

Ngaire Soul

A day in the life of a pop star . . . Ngaire to be precise, who is currently standing ankle deep in seawater in her stockinged feet, having been warned not to get water splashed on her red velvet coast (900 smackeroos from Zambesi). She's getting filmed on this wild West Coast beach for her forthcoming single 'Turn It Around'. Which means she meander along the seabed miming to the words booming out of the boogie box while trying to look as relaxed and natural as possible.

Fortunately, "relaxed and natural" is a big component of Ngaire's particular brand of charm, the other part being her gorgeous voice. We don't get much of a chance to talk today because makeup-artist *extraordinaire* Brent uses every spare moment to retouch her lipstick and false eyelashes (it's very important to look your best when you're languishing love-lorn on a beach).

So several days later I'm ascending the endless staircase at TVNZ, where Ngaire works as personal assistant to the head of Maori programming. Having a No.1

New Zealand single ('To Sir With Love') has not resulted in Ngaire giving up her day job for a life of personal appearances and performances, although she was recently invited to attend the opening of the Newmarket branch of Brash's in the guise of "celebrity guest", a notion which fills her with mirth. Her own employers have just cottoned onto her publicity potential, featuring her in an upcoming TV One promo clip alongside the likes of Paul Holmes and Penelope Barr. But the rest of the time, it's work by day, singing lessons once a fortnight, and the recording of her debut



album, *NGAIRE*, in her spare time.

Ngaire was discovered two years ago by producer / songwriter and D-Factioner Simon Lynch when she came along to sing backing vocals for her friend Krystal Jade, then singer in Simon's then band. If just so happened that Simon was in the process of setting up a new funky record label called Southside with Murray Cammick, and in Ngaire he recognised a great new voice — Southside being a label run by a pair of "great voice" connoisseurs.

In fact, Ngaire is blessed with a vocal delivery so flawless that the shopping mall audiences to whom she performed while promoting 'To Sir With Love' sometimes suspected she was lip-synching to the backing tape. Not so.

Alongside the ballads she likes to sing best, *Ngaire* the album features some funky dance tracks.

"I'm supposed to be this dance, soul funk singer," she confides over coffee in the TVNZ cafe, "that's fun, it's really energetic and good to sing to but I probably lean more towards the slower stuff." Mind you, having impressed herself on the national consciousness with the gentle sway of 'To Sir With Love' her audience is

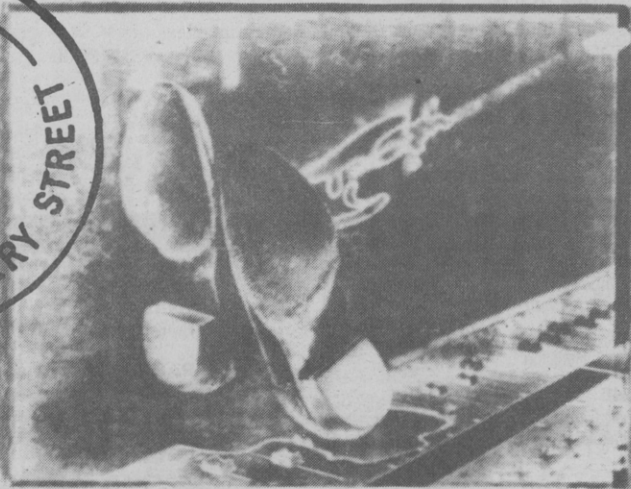
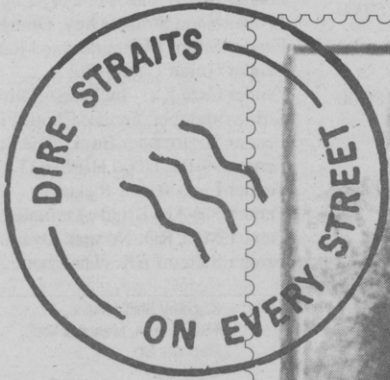
hardly going to expect her to do a 'Pump It Hottie'. Just as well, because Ngaire says she finds it hard to dance and sing at the same time, saying its like trying to rub your tummy while you pat your head.

Right now her singing instructor is urging her to catch up on the jazz greats, get records by Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday out of the library and study their phrasing. Ngaire is also keen to learn how to read and write music and learn to play the piano so she might compose her own material. She wrote the lyrics to one song on her album, 'Give Me A Chance' and would like to write more.

But live performance remains Ngaire's favourite part of the pop circus. She can cope with being recognised by gawping girls at Push concerts and stared at by blokes in passing cars, but the part that really matters to her is getting up on stage and singing those songs. A self-described "people pleaser", she loves the challenge of affecting a crowd. A fairly safe bet, one would wager, when Ngaire takes the stage.

DONNA YUZWALK

dire straits : calling elvis
the new single
7" MCSP 12" CDSP



the new album on every street september 9th