

# Ampersands

## *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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*Maria, Darren and Andrew interviewed during the recording of the glorious second collection, tentatively titled Searching For The Venus Fly, by David in January 1994.*

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**Maria:** “Not to be confused with the Sydney Ampersands, who we don’t know anything about.”

**I think you’d better just get your record out there first. (They did.) What’s the history of the Ampersands?**

**Darren:** “Maria and I had a band consisting of the two of us and Bart<sup>[1]</sup> called Brer Rabbit’s A Rascal, when Bart decided he basically wasn’t interested in playing in that format any more. Maria and I were invited to play a show in August of 1991 by Girl Of The World and the Sugargliders and Andrew played on a couple of songs. That night, we asked Kim to play as well and so we embarked on playing as a four-piece. That was the first Ampersands show.”

**Maria:** “Kim came along to watch to see if he’d be interested, and then we were playing pool at the famous Red Triangle at four o’clock in the morning and he said yes.”

**Songwriting?**

**Maria:** “Darren writes the most. He gets the biggest APRA cheque.”

**Darren:** “We write individually. Some are officially collaborations but probably shouldn’t be. I write about fifty percent.”

**Maria:** “Because I don’t play an instrument, I write the words and sing the harmony for Darren to play on the guitar.”

**What drives you to do all this?**

**Maria:** “I like playing live — I like the adrenalin — and I like writing music and putting in the fiddly bits of recorder and percussion. There’s also the interaction part: playing in a band with people and the scene of people.”

**Darren:** “I hate my day job and don’t want to have to work and would really like to make a living out of music, but playing music with some sort of integrity. We lose lots of money, but it’s all part of the big picture. Fame is more important than money, though. With honour.”

**Maria:** “It gives a balance to your day-job to be doing something creative.”

**Darren:** “With a job, you can afford to do it and you’re more driven to do it. Maria and I have both had time when we’re not working and we became really apathetic and didn’t produce much. As your work pressures increase, you have more reason to play in a band. And more to write about.”

**So, Darren, when’s Zeeeen! coming out?**

**Darren:** “Zeeeen! is dead, long live Zeeeen!”

**Tell us about You’re Standing On My Hula-Hoop and Zeeeen!**

**Maria:** “We still have a cupboard full of stuff. If people bother to write, we’ll send them stuff! At the moment, the band takes so much of our time that we haven’t got time to think about the label or the zine or the compilation tape that isn’t out.”<sup>[2]</sup>

### **History of band members?**

**Andrew:** “The Ampersands were the first band I ever played with ...”

**Darren:** “That’s bullshit!”

**Andrew:** “... and I’m grateful to them for putting me into the spotlight after all these years.”

**Maria:** “Many years ago, Andrew lived in far Western Australia and played in a band there called Fresh Trout.”

**Andrew:** “Do I have to? I could bore you with a story that goes nowhere. When I was twenty-one, I wanted to go overseas. I didn’t have any money, I had an awful job I was sick of and didn’t want to do, so I quit my job, went to Western Australia, got a job in a mine to make some money and joined this awful R & B covers band that played around the North-West for six months and broke up. It was pretty awful, but we made some money. If I make money again, I’ll give up.

“Years after that, I played with Ian in the Hardhat Cowboys<sup>[3]</sup> and with Stuart Mathieson in the Safari Dogs<sup>[4]</sup>. And I was in a Detroit/hardcore band in about 1981. That’s enough. And Bart pressured me into doing the Tremelo Fuzz tape.<sup>[5]</sup>”

**Darren:** “Our first band was Brer Rabbit’s A Rascal, the precursor to the Ampersands. Bart and I used that name to record when we had no four-track, no instruments, no musical ability and no songs. And we did one with Maria ten years later. Also the O’Shanassy Pipeline<sup>[6]</sup>, basically the bedroom equivalent of the Cat’s Miaow. The Normal Frogs are people whose voices I sampled.”

### **The Ampersands did a first album, *Half Folklore, Half Lies*, which you gave away to people rather than selling.**

**Darren:** “In June or July ’92, we’d been playing together for about six or eight months and recorded fifteen songs with Simon Grounds, the intention being to release a CD or twelve-inch vinyl. Which didn’t happen, but when Andrew visited America, he met with a guy called Tim Alborn in Boston, who does a fanzine called *Incite* and a label called Harriet<sup>[7]</sup> in Boston, who put three of the songs out in seven-inch format (*the present single*). If anyone wants a tape, they can write to us sending a C-46 and return postage and they get a cover and a booklet free.”

**Andrew:** “Most bands I like or know put their records out overseas, because people here aren’t interested, so we sent a tape overseas. Perhaps this new album will be more to the taste of local record labels.”

**Darren:** “We spent three months — twenty-one hundred dollars — eighty-four hours — recording it. Since the three of us work, we paid for it as we went.”

**Maria:** “We started this album in November last year and we’re still working on it. We’re doing seventeen songs and a few bits. We’ve got a lot more guest people on it. We’re hoping the second one will actually come out.”

**Darren:** “We’re pretty pissed-off the first one didn’t come out, but there’s not much we can do about it. We did find someone interested in doing three songs, so it wasn’t wasted. But I’m glad we did it. It was good fun, and it was fantastic having the final mix there to listen to. It was an excellent learning experience in the studio.”

**Maria:** “I still like it. The songs still sound really good, even after having played them live for ages.”

**You like it as a document, how is it as a statement?**

**Darren:** “It’s not a statement, just a document. The single is a pretty good excerpt — ‘Postcards’, a thrashy two-chord thing which is an extreme of the type of music we play, and the other side is ‘Dull Light’ by Andrew, an extreme in orchestrated balladry ... it may not have been written like that, but that’s the way I think it ended up. And ‘8826’, an extreme in quirky acoustic stuff.”

**Maria:** “Tim picked the songs for the single. He picked ‘Postcards’ and ‘8826’ and we put ‘Dull Light’ on there to better represent us.”

**Darren:** “I think the ‘Postcards’ 7” would stack up pretty good next to Stacey Q and Cold Chisel. It’s a good pop single. Can we just say that our producer, Simon Grounds, was in Shower Scene From Psycho? I just thought it might add some credibility to say that we’re in the Simon Grounds stable of bands. He’s our permanent mixer.”

**Who sessions on the new album?**

**Darren:** “Ian plays guitar on one song. Leisal Florian, the single’s cover star, does backing vocals. Angela Calligan does backing on one song. Stuart Mathieson, who played flute and mandolin on our first lot, will be playing flute. Shane O’Shanassy plays a bit of didgeridoo. Simon is going to play again; he played theremin on the first one — he built one — and he’ll be playing sax. And Sönke Rickertsen will be playing cello on the first song on the album. It’s less lounge room.”

**DIY as something that happens, but not necessarily as a religion.**

**Andrew:** “Still a good religion, but.”

**Maria:** “All the songs on the second one were written for the Ampersands, rather than being brought.”

**Darren:** “It’s just natural progression. When I write, I think of songs as being for the Ampersands’ setlist.”

**Andrew:** “For me it depends on the song where it goes. If the Cat’s Miaow are halfway through a cassette or whatever.”

**What was the Ampersands’ main influence when you were first starting out?**

**Darren:** “Oh God, David. When Stan first played us the Cannanes in 1986, we hero-worshipped ...”

**We were trying to work out the structure of the international pop underground on Wednesday — the Cannanes as the Beatles, Beat Happening as the Stones ...**

**Darren:** “I think that’s an accurate theory and a valid comparison. We could be Gerry and the Pacemakers.”

**Your first album fits right in the middle of that stuff, but your second stretches the form a bit. Discuss.**

**Maria:** “When we first played the second bunch of songs at the Richmond Club, some friends said the whimsy had gone out of the songs and they’d become more serious. I thought that was accurate.”

**Darren:** “I don’t think our songs are *serious*. Jesus. I just think we’ve gotten away from this Cannanes tribute band mentality.”

**Maria:** “They’re friends, and we know they’re stars, but we don’t play in their mould.”

**Andrew:** “The first one is a transition, anyway; half the songs were pre-Ampersands. You can pick a slight change in the direction of the songs we’ve written for the Ampersands as such.”

**How do you feel about being called the Ampersands?**

**Darren:** “‘*What’s an ampersand again?*’ Just tell ’em shift-seven.”

**Maria:** “We did the numerology on the name and it’s a nine, which is not a very successful number. Brer Rabbit must have been an even worse one. We wouldn’t change it because longevity is an important part of being good.”

**The Cannanes, Survivor, the Rolling Stones ...**

**Maria:** “The Cannanes’ new album<sup>[8]</sup> wouldn’t be as good as it is if they hadn’t been together for years.”

**Andrew:** “I’m hoping it’s ‘*The Ampersands do Neu!*’ next. Not the jackhammer bit, though.”

**Darren:** “We’re struggling at present to expand on the instrumental format. We’re not that bloody proficient. I have trouble playing anything other than chords; Maria’s not the greatest singer in the world; Andrew’s not the greatest bass-player — I mean, he’s no Bart or anything; Kim can’t keep time. So we’ve got to rely on a lot of things that aren’t in our musicianship, like the songwriting or Maria throwing flowers at the audience. I’ve just been reading this interesting article in *Cross* magazine about the donkey’s rôle in pornography ... One of the things that makes the new songs a lot more solid is that we actually play a lot better.”

**Do you get people getting into it at shows who you don’t know and who aren’t friends of friends?**

**Maria:** “There are always new people we haven’t seen before who come up to us afterwards, which is lovely.”

**So what do you each do for a living?**

**Darren:** “Maria works for the Directorate of Education.”

**Maria:** “I’m a consultant in the area of the education of girls. I love my job. I’m actually very committed to it. I’m the ideologically-sound influence on the band.”

**Darren:** “Whereas I read books written by male authors. And I have a collection of pornographic leaflets. That’s what the Ampersands are about: pornography and correctness. I *really* wanna know how those guys actually get a whole fist up their arse.

“I work for the ANZ Bank. I work for all the country branches, consulting for all the people who lend money.”

**And who are you a consultant to, Andrew?**

**Andrew:** “I don’t actually make boilers as such, boilermaking’s just the name of the trade itself; I just construct things out of steel. I try to convince myself that I don’t like it, but I really don’t mind. It’s good fun to make things — grown-up Meccano or something.”

**Darren:** “Every band should have a mike stand made by Andrew.”

**Maria:** “If you can lift it.”

**Andrew:** “I’d like to see the singer of Pearl Jam smash one of my mike stands.”

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*Since this interview, Andrew has left the band but is finishing up his stuff on the album. Write to YSOMHHP for the first one (remember return postage on the tape!) and release the second one if you’re a label. Thank you.*

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[1] Famed member of the Zeeeen! collective, based in the Victorian country town of Leongatha, about seventy kilometres out of Melbourne. Member of Girl Of The World and the mind behind Cat’s Miaow.

[2] You’re Standing On My Hula Hoop Productions produced ten issues of *Zeeeen!* and a pile of cassettes from 1989 to 1991. Write for a list: 66 Newry Street, Fitzroy North 3068.

[3] Tape through YSOMHHP.

[4] Tape through YSOMHHP.

[5] Try Toytown, PO Box 295, St Kilda 3182 — SASE for full catalogue.

[6] Tape through YSOMHHP.

[7] PO Box 649, Cambridge MA 02238, USA.

[8] *Caveat Emptor* by the Cannanes, recorded in 1991 and released 1993 on Feel Good All Over.

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2012 note: Darren's put the Ampersands stuff up on his [Soundcloud](#).

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[ [Party Fears #19](#) | [Party Fears](#) ]

# Australian Roadfool

## Sydney and Melbourne tour diary, December 1993–January 1994

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**Day 1: Sunday 26th December, 1993**

*“Rule 1: Never, ever start chatting with any person that may be sitting next to you, particularly towards the beginning of the journey ... be blunt and sullen to anyone who may initiate a conversation. They’re only after money, drugs, a place to ‘crash’ or a hand-job.”* — Rob Clarkson, *Form Guide #1*

The secret to surviving the bus is to stay as close to absolute zero as possible. You were rudely awakened from your sleep to get on the damned thing and you certainly can’t sleep in any normal fashion whilst in transit, so spend your time in whatever Twilight Zone is available. Think ‘semi-conscious, comatose’. This way, you’ll hardly notice the recirculating air conditioning sending desert-dry air straight into your cracking lips (Sick Bus Syndrome), the video (thank you, God, for busting the power inverter and denying us this particular pleasure on the first leg of the journey) or even the yapping moron next to you with the IQ of soap who keeps trying to start a conversation with you. And *you* can poke *your* elbow into *him* when *you’re* asleep.

The Bus isn’t an overpowering, full-on, in-your-face hell — it’s a *subtle* one that works its magic by being vaguely unpleasant for a *very long time*. Stay sleepy. Do it right and you’ll get the best rest ever.

Make sure you bring full-cover headphones<sup>[1]</sup> (the open-air type let out too much sound — you need to be able to fake intense listening while your Walkman is actually off; they also look more imposing and say ‘fuck off’ more clearly), codeine (slows the thought processes with few side effects — thank God for opiates and crook backs) and *The Atrocity Exhibition* by J.G. Ballard (anyone trying to read this one over your shoulder gets what they deserve — particularly the aforementioned cretin with the *True Detective* magazine and *Conan The Barbarian* black and white comic). Have food at every stop and on the journey. (Just a little bit — draws blood to the gut and away from the brain. You may want to bring some with you rather than spend a fortune on chips, chips and more chips along the way.) Avoid movement (this might get the blood flowing), anything with caffeine in it (particularly Coca-Cola), thought or action. Have three or four thin layers of clothing that you can put on or take off whilst seated. And remember: even in mid-summer, the Nullarbor is *cold* at night. (Though the bus itself was actually slightly warmer by night than day ...)

As a merger between Greyhound and Pioneer, Greyhound-Pioneer has coaches from both fleets. The Pioneer seats are actually okay (*i.e.*, passable if you’re six-four) and the Greyhound ones are completely ratshit. But if you wanted comfort you should have taken the plane, and I don’t mean economy. Bring a small cushion or pillow. If you actually want to sleep at any time overnight, bring a hat, a velvet eyemask or a black shirt (what I used) to stick over your eyes. This is vital.

Oh, yeah — *never* use the toilet on the bus. If you do, I will have to kill you.

Hot day today; motherfuckin’ hot, actually. But the less you move, the more you can soak up the heat instead of sweating it out.

Now listening to *Fast Forward* #013. My handy-dandy Aiwa HS-J501 rechargeable walkie does take batteries for those little moments when you're nowhere near a power socket for two days — three and three-quarter hours continuous play from two black AAAs, six or seven from alkalines. You find this technical data dull? It's of towering goddamn importance to *me*.

*Fast Forward* is an amazing beast: a cassette-magazine put out by Bruce Milne (founder of Au Go Go) and Andrew Maine (who left indie music, started gay where-to-go list the *G'day Guide* and died in 1989) from 1981 until late 1982. The magazine stopped due not to economic ruin, but personal differences between the editors; a pity, as it was a real winner and I recommend you obtain all the issues you can — a valuable piece of Australian music history.

Coming from the first flush of Walkmans and large stereo ghetto-blasting boxes, when cassette culture was all the go and a vastly exciting concept, the idea of the magazine is that you listen to the tape (walking the streets, doing the dishes, travelling across the country) and dip into the booklet for the details on each track. Contains all sorts of happy surprises and indie oddities that will delight you.

Number thirteen features **And An A** (1981 demo “Holiday Crowd”), a **Tiny Tim** interview, \*\*\*\* \* (Cough Cough — Canberra punk band; not too bad; in it for the music), **Sacred Cowboys** (“Is Nothing Sacred” four-track demo), some cretin from *The Face* (back when it was regarded as part of the music press), some **Hunters and Collectors** (Greg Perano era) on a day off doing a beautiful C’n’W version of “Shivers” with Perano singing (and it pretty much works, too), some live **Laughing Clowns** (damn fine), the **Manikins**, **Philip Brophy** on *Subculture* by Dick Hebdige (“every *image means something and all styles convey meaning; the essence of all subculture is being conscious of style. Me? I just bought a whole lot of flared trousers*”), Ted Milton *a.k.a.* **Blurt**<sup>[2]</sup>, the **Legendary Pink Dots**, some hair care tips from the **Cure** and interview plus live stuff from **Mark E. Smith** and the **Fall**.

Any record nerd would *kill* for any issue of *Fast Forward*. You, however, should grab any you see because it's *good*. Inspirational.

Lost the battle with consciousness; however, I have discovered that there is in fact someone I know on board, which is *very* reassuring — Fleur Ruane, a friend of Liana's, who is going to Melbourne as well and is seeing Liana before the latter pops off the next day to some hippy-fest. So I can see Li and give her the photos of her sideburns and catch up and whatnot. And Fleur also wants some of the PFs I'm smuggling across state lines — twenty-one kilograms of unsaleable back issues, to be marked 'FREE' and chucked in shops.

Fleur has a tape-player, but brought a total of two tapes with her. Now I know why I brought twenty — public assistance. Always good to help someone actually worth helping.

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## Day 2: Monday 27th December

I'm sure the Ceduna roadhouse gives a kickback to Greyhound-Pioneer. You get herded in bleary-eyed and have a menu shoved in front of you with “*Minimum Charge \$3.50*” at the bottom. But there is the bottomless tea or coffee for \$1.50. And quite nice it is, too. (Test your bladder capacity avoiding the bus toilet, however.)

The South Australian ‘countryside’ is way different to the trackless expanses of WA ‘bush’ — more rolling hills and twisty highways ... more of a good old English sensibility to it.

Don't try to take fresh fruit across the WA-SA border or it'll just get taken by quarantine. Instead, share in the bags of apples and oranges that other fools have brought along and basically give away to fellow passengers rather than waste on officialdom.

I am amazed to discover that a car pulling into a roadhouse through dusty red gravel looks *exactly* like it does in a petrol ad on telly. I'm somewhat disappointed that the real thing doesn't do better. Where's the social cachet in leaving the house?

Just lent Fleur *Generation X* — another great bus novel<sup>[3]</sup>, and especially for an Xer on a cross-country trip. Like using *American Roadtool* as a US tour guide. Me, I'm busy with *Sick Burn Cut* by Deran Ludd — a great little crime/gay/drug/rock'n'roll/gratuitous violence novel ("*Mary is a 31-year-old man with a revolver in a cheap cotton dress*") that is, of course, highly recommended.<sup>[4]</sup>

My Walkman is my best friend on this trip. *Fast Forward*, *Kill Yr Idols* comp, A Terminal Posture (the *first* time I've listened on headphones — Jesus!), New Waver, Third Eye (Ollie Olsen), the Goons and now the NME *Mighty Reel* (a good 1982 comp). It's a bit of a worry when the tape player's plastic slipcase makes it easier to change the batteries than the tape, though.

A strange thing, but full-tilt rock'n'roll, despite being just the thing for a journey by car, is *not* the thing for the bus — it may be the finest of music, but it's not sonically varied enough to take your attention away from the unpleasant aspects of your surroundings you have no direct control over. Not enough ear-candy. However, live tapes of rock'n'roll work because the murky sound requires you to enter its space (thus leaving the one you're in to some degree) and, of course, because you're following the event.

At one point I made the error of scanning the radio — nothing on bar a Sattleresque middle-class Nazi talkback circle-jerk and some of that pseudo-'music' stuff they play on those 'commercial' stations. Back to the tape and Robert Wyatt singing "Round Midnight" ... phew, that's more like it.

Fleur made the same radio discovery as me. We got off at Adelaide and went in search of a cashcard machine and a pub. Found hideous 'restaurant' where we were forced to buy gratuitous \$2.50 chips with our \$1.80 watered-down middies; left rapidly and wandered the streets until we found a fellow traveller (a nice country girl called Kylie) and a pub with one-dollar "*schooners*" (middies) and champagne. The champagne was piss-awful (Fleur had two), but it did have a strawberry stuck on the rim — the secret is apparently to be smelling the strawberry while you swallow the stuff.

Attempted to call Thrash Grind Grunge when we got in at 6:30 p.m., but no-one was in ... oh, it's a holiday. Duh. ('Holiday?')

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### Day 3: Tuesday 28th December

Trundled in at 7:00 a.m. (the freeway to Melbourne starts a hundred kilometres out at Ballarat) and was met by Leisal Florien and Darren O'Shanassy and carted off to La Maison Hula-Hoop, a charming little terrace house in Fitzroy, there to be fed cereal and coffee and dazzle Leisal, Darren and Maria Poletti with my wit and wisdom. (Babble like a loon.) Set up spare room (!), called Louise, showered and put my trip clothes *outside*. Thence to sleep.



Woke at 2:30 p.m., went downstairs to see the Ampersands in rehearsal action and waited for native guide Louise Dickinson (and native guide dog Arlo), who had arrived in Melbourne a week earlier. (Christmas with the folks, don't you know.) Off to town we go. The old House of Hula-Hoop<sup>[5]</sup> was at the southern end of Napier Street, right on Victoria Parade; catching trams into town from here is sorta like catching buses from my house in West Perth, *i.e.* it's a non-trivial walk, but you'd have to be a bit bloody lazy to *pay* for a lift.

Melbourne is asthma city. Surrounded by farmland on all sides ... polluted ... cold ... I haven't had asthma attacks as a daily feature of life since the age of seventeen and I don't recommend them. My smoking approached zero this holiday as I certainly didn't need to do anything voluntarily to lessen my lung function.

Louise and I wandered all around town, going nowhere in particular ... got back to Fitzroy, looked at the architectural-nightmare Housing Commission flats (two large free-standing blocks in the middle of a no-go area parkland — ideal suicide location, apparently, though it has the best kids' park Lou has ever seen), had a coupla pots at Squizzy Taylor's (loser local and quite enjoyable; middies are called 'pots' here, presumably so as not to confuse Victorians with too many syllables) and back to Napier Street. The band had gone to tea, so we hung out with Arlo.

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#### **Day 4: Wednesday 29th December**

Off wandering city streets again, this time with Leisal and Maria. Lucky Strikes (on croak: "*As advertised on television!*") for \$3.90 a packet! Must get some shipped over. Tried to explain smoking to Maria, didn't manage to get it across.

The city centre of Melbourne has a different feel to Perth's. It's a little more pedestrian-oriented. Trams are omnipresent. Every pissweak alley has a street name and is lined with interesting shops. Melbourne didn't go through the raze/rebuild cycle Perth suffered during the sixties mineral boom (and is still suffering — currently in 'raze'), so there's still lots of nice architecture (cool old big things) there.

(*Q.* How do you play 'chicken' in the city centre of Melbourne? *A.* Cross when the light is green for you.)

Visited **Au Go Go**, bought some fanzines and did something I've always wanted to do: went up to the counter and asked, "*Hey, I'm after this zine — it's called Party Fears and it's from Perth. I haven't seen it in a while, I know you used to have it in here ...*" "*Oh yeah,*" said the bright young chappie behind the counter, "*one came out a few months ago ... should be in any day now. Keep coming in.*" "*Oh, right. Thanks.*"

(Went upstairs and asked the same question: "*One came out two years ago, then a single-sheet about a year ago; I think it's dissolved.*" A little more like it ... sigh. I noted the first encounter on my customer response form and got back a letter from Bevan Richards explaining that some old PFs had been found and put out a few months earlier and the fellow downstairs may well have taken that to be the latest issue. I wasn't offended/upset — did find it quite funny.)

The downstairs of Au Go Go is the new and hip shop and has that 'excitement' vibe; upstairs is the collector's shop, with horrible prices on great stuff and a selection of old zines. (Still had a copy of PF#2 from '86 — Stems, Marigolds, Greasy Pop — for a dollar.) Both shops are incredibly cramped — I'd feel unwelcome to do much even with no-one else there. (The upstairs has recently been extended.) Finest

indie-head shop I saw in Melbourne, but. Or Sydney, for that matter.

**Gaslight** is an alternative (rather than indie) record shop, but its new-reduced rack is an occasional winner ... they must have a truly clueless buyer easily talked into things. Their loss is our gain. Incredibly small and crowded.

Popped into **PolyEster Records** for a howdy, chat & checkout; got *Your Flesh #27*, with a Daniel Clowes cover which made Leisal go, “*That’s the most disgusting thing I’ve ever seen,*” then Maria go, “*That’s the most disgusting thing I’ve ever seen,*” then the shop assistant go, “*That’s the most disgusting thing I’ve ever seen.*” I’d be pretty happy, guys.<sup>[6]</sup>

A weird thing about this holiday: I thought I’d be buying a *lot* of records. I didn’t buy very many at all, because there was just about nothing new that I couldn’t get at House Of Wax. (Indie distribution is pretty worked-out in Australia now — if you’re not through one of the two small-majors, you don’t exist.) What I did buy was fanzines. Zines, zines, zines! I spent somewhere around a hundred and fifty bucks on books and fanzines this holiday. These being the things that are somewhat harder to get interstate. Not what I expected to happen. Fine with me, but.

Maria ran me down to Mentone, a Godforsaken south-eastern suburb near Moorabbin, where Lou’s folks’ place is.

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### Day 5: Thursday 30th December

We drove around Melbourne in Louise’s brother Justin’s car. As Constable Care would say: “*Just because you’re in the rain! Doesn’t mean the other driver isn’t insane.*” The roads are covered in a sprawling rococo mosaic of paint and objects, hardly resembling the minimalist aesthetic of Perth or Adelaide at all — lane markings, tram lines, stop lines, *really* stop lines, parking-sign substitutes, stopping-the-other-way lines, bluestone gutters that crunch the front of your car ... Melbourne drivers have no concept of lanes because, between the trams and the parked cars, they really don’t mean a lot. Also, the rule is to do unto others before they do unto you: *every* hour is rush hour. Driving around Fitzroy in the daytime is an excellent way to raise your blood pressure.

One surprising point is that Melbourne drivers actually drive *at the speed limit*. Nepean Highway is an eight-lane horror running one trillion miles down to the Mornington Peninsula. Eighty all the way; in Perth (where speed limits are strictly advisory and left and right are interchangeable), it’d be a hundred normally and at least one-twenty in peak hour. There are lots of cameras, you see. Hence, the ‘70’ sign on main roads isn’t being generous; it actually means *seventy*, not one hundred as it would in Perth.

(The famed Melbourne hook turn — to turn right at an intersection with crossing tram lines, you go over to the *left* lane and wait for the orange/red light before crossing; saves trams from being queued up behind right turners — isn’t actually very scary, despite large numbers of people claiming it’d freak me out. In fact, it’s sensible in the circumstances.)

Listened to 3-RRR on the car radio at just about all times. I’m told this has lamed out severely of late, but it sounded just dandy to me. It’s so nice to tune in to a mostly-music station (as opposed to a bit-of-everything station like RTR) and hear *actual rockin’ music* just being *broadcast*, like it’s *no big deal* or something. Heartwarming. As Louise put it, “*there’s no way you couldn’t grow up right listening to RRR.*”

Visited Chapel Street in Prahran and saw ... lots of people with black clothes! Pointy shoes! Too much hair! Sunglasses! The genuine Melbourne Stereotype, come to life! This is the sort of thing a tourist *wants* to see! Every second-hand record bin had, unfortunately, been picked clean by people with knowledge ... Wandered up Greville Street and stopped at **Greville Records**, which is OK but didn't radicalise my life, and **Kill City**, a real cool crime & related book store where I stocked up on back issues of *Fatal Visions*.

Further up Chapel Street are lots of the beautiful people in full 1993/94 fashion splendour — ideal site for on-location filming of a drive-by, I think. Do as many takes as you deem necessary.

The Esplanade Hotel in St Kilda has the right atmosphere and we managed to sneak Arlo in (dogs verboten in pubs since 1st July 1993). Decided on the Powder Monkeys as our New Year's entertainment; then back to Fitzroy for ...

### **AMPERSANDS / CATWEASEL** — *Empress, Melbourne, Thursday 30/12/93*

Missed the first band, the **Lounge Suite**. Was told they were real good. **Catweasel**, however, are the sort of thing that happens a lot here, according to Maria — *lots* of kids who learn musical instruments at school and then form an incredibly bad band. And no doubt go on to release an unlistenable CD through MDS which sells three copies. You don't want to know. We stayed away.

The **Ampersands** were fun and pretty OK. I chatted to a penpal I'd never met (Bart) and I suspect we were each exactly what the other expected us to be, which is cool. The point being that the Ampersands were the right backing music for the job. Also good 'front' music, *i.e.* to focus your attention on. It's cosy cute indie-pop of the Cannanes-follower genre, but with aspirations to more. (Aspirations realised on the forthcoming second album.) Cool sunflowers hanging off Kim's kit. All of Catweazel's friends left, but that's no loss.

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### **Day 6: Friday 31st December**

Zooming around again. Got a pic of the *Dogs In Space* house — one for the tourist checklist; it has sheets instead of curtains, so it may well be a rock'n'roll house again.

Went to a nice park in St Kilda (gotta sample the kids' stuff, y'know; very punk rock), then visited Mentone Beach, which is a disgusting shithole. Melbourne is on the northern rim of Port Philip Bay, and all the silt, gunge and slime of the Yarra pours into the bay. The water was brown and slimy and the beach was seaweed-saturated and covered in weirdly-decayed fish and lots of garbage left behind by people who didn't give a shit. Louise talked of childhood picnics and lovely times on this very beach and started expressing environmentalist urges for the first time.

### **POWDER MONKEYS / SEMINAL RATS** — *Great Britain, Melbourne, Friday 31/12/93*

The Great Britain in Richmond is a hip venue and a grotty little dive. It's the sort of dive people fall in love with, though. Apparently, bands that play there have to pay the venue for their door-person so that the door-person can let the 'regulars' in free. The GB's New Year gift to the punters was to admit only ticket-holders (three dollars entry), thus keeping the crowd down to legal capacity and the air breathable. Sound

is OK and layout would probably be tolerable in all except sardine circumstances.

The **Seminal Rats** have always seemed completely pointless to me on record — another Birdman/Stooges band. Woo woo — but live is their reason for existence. They are fuckin' hot. The drummer hits incredibly hard and precise. The rock is *there*. Nice to see.

The **Powder Monkeys** feature Tim Hemensley, ex-God and Bored!, and John Nolan, also ex-Bored! Tim needs to go to kindergarten for a couple of years to learn some social skills (if I'd been the mixer receiving the abuse Tim gave — and the mix was perfect — I'd have been seriously tempted to spin every knob and walk), but the Powder Monkeys were goddamned brilliant as well. Particular points to the harpist, Jed Sayers. Lou says this show wasn't as good as it should have been (compared to their track record), but (a) it worked as far as I'm concerned (and further) and (b) she rocked out wildly just fine, thank you. There's a particular look in the eye that glowering loners get in the presence of pure high-energy rock'n'roll. We had a fine time this New Year.

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### **Day 7: Saturday 1st January, 1994**

Woke up at Lou's folks', packed our stuff and went for a long drive down to the Mornington Peninsula for a fun day out. A hundred-odd kilometres down Nepean Highway with an out-of-date road map (missing lots of recent freeways), listening to the JJJ Hot One Hundred and cursing Dave Graney's low placing.<sup>[7]</sup> Past Frankston (end of the railway line; a bogan hell that Gosnells and Kelmscott could only aspire to — just keep moving!), through hill and vale, onto the Mornington Freeway (a freeway that starts in the middle of nowhere and goes to the middle of nowhere — huh?) and there you are.

Zipped around the Mornington Peninsula a bit. Flinders has a great spot to see the ocean from. There's one place further along the southern coast (the 'back' beach) I forget the name of which you have to pay a toll to visit; we chose not to, deciding it was time to go to the 'front' beach — Rosebud, Rye and Sorrento, on the inside of the bay.

The day was bloody perfect. The water is clean and lovely (not like Mentone — it's close enough to the ocean outflow here) and has almost no waves whatsoever. (We actually got Arlo to go into the water!) Way too many people (particularly families), but I suspect everyone else had exactly the same idea as us for a nice New Year's Day.

Someone told me the RRR program manager lives around here and commutes the hundred and twenty kilometres to Fitzroy. I can see someone loving it enough.

Mentone is where Louise had the inestimable joy of growing up. It could be a Perth suburb just like the one I grew up in that I just hadn't ever gotten around to visiting (or ever would, had I any say in it; but never mind). On Saturday evening, we rented a video of *Heathers* and sat in a suburban bedroom in a suburban house watching a video, just as if we couldn't watch *Heathers* in any suburb anywhere in the world.

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## Day 8: Sunday 2nd January

Train into town; went to all the shops. (Every shop in the city centre is open on Sunday!) **Peril 305** was entertaining: on your right is a CD shop full of techno-industrial-goth (and a second-hand vinyl bin of ten-year-old New Wave!), on your left is a goth candle shop and upstairs is a science-fiction bookshop of the sort that has twenty different Star Trek novels and no J.G. Ballard. Goth-nerds, don'tcha love 'em? What a great shop that was.

(Actually, the industrial shop is damn fine. Everything is full price or more, but I guess you can't buy discount all your life ... try as I might. It's specialist, it knows what it's about, check it out.)

Spent the day with Leisal including a visit to record shop **Sister Ray**. Way-cool name; the shop doesn't really measure up. Also stocks Doc Marten shoes, 501 jeans and an extensive line of hip T-shirts.<sup>[8]</sup> Presumably the idea is that you can walk in naked with a credit card and walk out fully subcultured — your One-Stop Grunge Shop. The second-hand prices start at the unlikely and shoot right for the outrageous and various corporate policies seem designed to keep the riff-raff out (if you want to examine second-hand vinyl, you're supposed to take it up to the counter and have them show it to you. Yeah, *right*). Leisal shopped there because it was literally around the corner from her house and because they've been good with conventional orders (don't expect obscurities); I could pass it by real easy.

Darren came over and we went out to a secret bunker in Abbotsford to get a rough mix of the Ampersands' second album, but I have been foresworn to reveal no further detail. (Sure is fun watching a mixdown, but.) Later on we (us three and mad supergenius pop legend Simon Grounds) went out for a night of bad pubbing.

Checked a band called **Long Black Limousine** at the North Melbourne (a dive), who were horrifying. All fantastically good musicians in the soul-funk-jazz-blues line, playing a muso mishmash that was perfect in every detail, but only in the detail. They were so insanely goddamn boring ... I was actually impressed with their fantastic musicianship, which is pretty rare for me, but they didn't play one song of the faintest musical interest; if they had, it would have been the best thing ever heard. Some musicians are born sessioners; always beware of a sideman who starts talking about "*finally playing the stuff we've always really wanted to play, man.*" We quickly realised we had no reason to be there and left. (After Simon had done the conversational rounds, of course — what a social moth.)

Thence to the Evelyn, to be famed in song on the second Ampersands album. Another dive, of course; you can't see the stage if there's an audience. Band was a hideous pile of shit called **Clowns Of Decadence** who sounded like Skyhooks at their worst (and were way too loud, of course); had clown makeup and everything. I got heavily into Cascade (Tasmania) for the first time — damn fine, both varieties. Got horribly pissed and made it home alive.

Simon Grounds is a great man. Pop star, producer, mixer, *bon vivant* ... In ten thousand years, when the human race has evolved, everyone will look like Simon Grounds. Simon Grounds belongs on kids' T-shirts.<sup>[9]</sup>

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## Day 9: Monday 3rd January

Intermittently pissing down, but I decided to go for a walk up Brunswick Street on my own.

**PolyEster Books:** they've got this one *right*. As Bart put it: "*yeah, it's a sex, drugs & rock'n'roll bookshop.*" I circled the place once (as you do when you're in a new shop for the first time) and picked up

fifty dollars of stuff I *could not* live without. Dangerous place to enter carrying money. I could get used to this. Nice neon “Bob”-face on the back wall.

(A word on convenience and Melbourne: maybe this only applies in Fitzroy, but everything is *so* easy and available. Every petrol station is open twenty-four hours and has a mini-supermarket in it. 7-Elevens from sea to shining sea. Sure, they charge like wounded bulls on most things, but a 500ml Mountain Dew is always \$1.40–\$1.50. And that’s the sort of thing that counts. Most shops on Brunswick Street are open seven days a week and until midnight six of those days; they may not open in the morning until ten, but hey, it’s not like you *work* or anything. This level of convenience is the difference between a real city like Melbourne and a pretend one like Perth. Yeah, I liked Fitzroy a whole lot.)

Made it home with zine pile, a book and some records (grabbed some strangely-underpriced second-handers from Sister Ray) in the pouring, freezing rain. I looked at the sky and thought: It’s *summer* in Perth right now. Forty degrees never looked more attractive.

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**Day 10:** *Tuesday 4th January*

**BORED!** — *Punter’s Club, Tuesday 4/1/94*

**Cosmic Psychos** were also on the bill, but we left before them. Missed openers **Aunty Theo**, who apparently have some sort of ‘vibe’ happening, for what it’s worth ... **Bored!** were goddamn fine. Louise says they weren’t as hot as usual, but a support slot is a fine place to ease up and just play. They didn’t look into wild performance ... but the playing and the music was damn perfect. “*Apparently, this is our reunion show ... I didn’t know we’d split, but I guess you can always believe the music press ...*” Yeah, or your publicist, mate. Bored! are a purist musical band and you wouldn’t believe how boring the photos we got were, but anything not music isn’t the point here. Hey, I’m real glad I got to see them at last.

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**Day 11:** *Wednesday 5th January*

Wednesday wandering around Mentone. Today Louise got a tattoo, something she’s wanted to do since the age of about thirteen. It’s a pretty cool one.

Spent the evening at Bart Cummings and Andrew Withycombe’s place. A couple of vats of fine homebrew maturing in the kitchen. We got into *severe* record-playing and discussion of the indie-pop aesthetic.

The International Pop Underground is a weird creature. It exists on cassette, in fanzines and by mail network. In fact, I would compare it to the hardcore network at its mid-80s height, in terms of something that lives and breathes by interpersonal networking and can still shift a reasonable (whatever you want to call reasonable) number of copies of stuff. (As one person mixed up in it put it: “*Yeah, it’s really weird when you send away for a fanzine and get back an offer to do a record ...*”) Of course, the music is generally a hell of a lot better. Heh.

In fact, let’s go into some depth here. The Postcard bands are the obscure blues men of the far past. *All indie-pop is Scottish in its roots.* (The Go-Betweens are an anomaly in this regard, but since they recorded for Postcard we can paper over this one for the moment.) The Cannanes are the Beatles; Beat Happening

are the Rolling Stones. (This might be the other way around.) The Ampersands know the Cannanes (one cool point) and did an indie zine, *Zeeeen!* (two cool points), so they're pretty damn cool. The Cat's Miaow (Bart's unit) know the Ampersands (half a cool point) and Bart wrote for *Zeeeen!* (another half) and Andrew was in the Ampersands and is in Cat's Miaow (another half) and are *good* (all you'd need in any sane world, but for the present purpose it means another half cool point), so are also pretty damn cool and get hand-duplicated tapes into the Ajax and Toytown catalogues. The Summer Suns are *extremely* good and have girls on their record sleeves (bar the latest single) and Kim Williams runs a shop and answers his mail, so that's two to three cool points. If you're from Dunedin you get a free five cool points, being Xpressway-linked nets you another five. Being on Flying Nun used to score you ten cool points, but now gets you two flat rocks and a bottle-cap. Etcetera.

Cool shit played: unreleased Cannanes recordings (the third album, *Caveat Emptor*, is finally out after two years' delay, and it's a killer. They've learnt to *play*, and the world will never be safe again<sup>[10]</sup>), a Neu! record and some mind-bogglingly obscure New Zealand album (the band is called Dadamah, apparently a Christchurch-scene band with connections to the Terminals ... I'm taking Andrew's word on this) with a thick brown card cover, like the record sleeves of suburban loser bands who don't have a clue about how to do a record independently (let alone music listenably) and get every element weirdly off-kilter. Except this band are profoundly talented rather than profoundly talentless.

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## Day 12: Thursday 6th January

Up nice and early (the room I crashed in at Leisal's had no curtain and faced east), walked up Brunswick Street and discovered (as noted above) that nothing is open until ten. Not even the laundromat opens until nine. Weird.

Spent the day going all around town with Louise, doing the shops and looking for batteries for her Kim Salmon interview (harder than I would have expected in a city). Got myself a photocopied map of the city centre (don't you hate it when a shop insists on doing it for you and can't actually work their own copier?), something I should have done before leaving Perth — pages 1A and 1B of the Melways, that's the go.

Free PFs at Au Go Go. Visited **Minotaur Books**, a fine science fiction/fantasy/comics shop trying to cyberpunk itself up into a sex, drugs & rock'n'roll bookshop. However, the *Sexy Robot Trading Cards* (!) near the entrance don't really cut it. So many nerds in one place ... I did buy some nice things there (*Comic Relief*, *Journal of Irreproducible Results*). For EFTPOS you have to go down to the basement and they *don't* do cash out. (What happened to that lovely Melbourne convenience?)

Dropped Lou at Sir Kim's (there to hear of Brett Rixon's death) and went to visit Greg Wadley, brother of mah good friend and PF correspondent Ian (who I'd called in the hope he was in town; he wasn't, but passed me on to Greg).

Mr Wadley is the brain behind New Waver (*Middle-Class Man*, *Low Self-Opinion*, *Perverted By Wheat*, *Hard-Driving Beat*, *Aspects Of Loserdom*), the Spill label<sup>[11]</sup> (hundreds of *Spill Compilation Two* CDs, inserts and boxes on his bedroom floor) and retired publisher of *Loser* magazine. *Loser* was (still is) truly a magazine for today: being a glowering loner with an analytical mind and an artistic vision doesn't necessarily mean your unique and hard-fought individual vision is worth any more than the other millions of pretty much identical individual visions. Aren't you thrilled by people who think analysis and persistence can substitute for actual intelligence and clue? Once the office loser, always the office loser ...

Greg was (at this time) living in a house in Fitzroy that was actually being severely renovated — the back half being demolished and rebuilt, no less. This left it kitchenless, but the owner asked Greg to stay on at a peppercorn rent; and at twenty-five dollars a week (!) for a house just off Brunswick Street, you can afford to eat out every night. No need to leave his bedroom otherwise — home studio (guitar, keyboard, eight-track reel and microphone) set up for instant access when inspiration strikes and laptop computer at hand for his doctoral thesis in zoology: that humans are addicted to wheat. Heaven on a stick, hey?<sup>[12]</sup>

Evening at Lou's folks'. On the evening news, we saw the reports of bushfires in Sydney ... specifically the ones running down the Lane Cove River to Lane Cove, where every goddamned thing Louise owned (the CDs! the Macintosh! the CD player!) was.

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### **Day 13: Friday 7th January**

Circled the city centre on my own, checking out every shop. Ye olde **Missing Link** is tucked away on the south edge; I wouldn't have found it if I hadn't tripped over it. There's lots of musician-wanted ads and zines (got an old *Eddie*) and hardcore records. It's still there.

Au Go Go didn't have the freed back issues I'd chucked in there, but upstairs did have *Party Fears* #11<sup>1/2</sup>, the first of the 1991 free ones, on sale for a dollar (\$1.00 price tag over the word 'FREE'). I left a 'howdy' note and a request for seventy-five cents of that dollar in the suggestion box. (Reply letter from Mr Milne with apology and promise of investigation and a similar letter later from Bevan Richards — thank you. Apparently procedures have been markedly tightened and the offender tracked down and killed horribly.)

Back home, spent several hours reading Darren's zine collection and noticed what an effect the Macintosh<sup>[13]</sup> has had on minimum standards of zine production. I mean, you certainly don't *need* a Macintosh (witness *Woozy*) ... but *fuck*, zines looked bad in the mid-eighties.<sup>[14]</sup> At least these days, people absorb half a clue about design from the environment of everyone else using Macs. (Even *Woozy* wouldn't look like it does without the Mac influence — the idea that anyone can make their zine *look like something*.) Photocopying (both for reduction and for printing) is easier to steal and of higher quality nowadays too.

At some point, Darren and I were discussing generational wank and came to the realisation that people like us (we're both twenty-seven) are still going to be doing bands and zines and shit when we're seventy and beyond. Yes, there'll always be a spiritual heartland to go to. It might not be a very *big* one, mind you ...

**PLIP PLOP — AMPERSANDS / RED TEXAS / STINKY FIRE ENGINE / EARTHMEN / SUGARGLIDERS — Punter's Club, Melbourne, Friday 7/1/94**

**The Ampersands** came on at nine o'clock to the crowd they brought and the other bands and not many others. No-one showed on time (plenty arrived later and asked when they were going on) and they played brilliantly — a planned-out half-hour presentation set. Andrew's last live show, by the way. I was there and you weren't.

**Stinky Fire Engine** played their third show in four years. I can see why they don't bring it out more often. (Though tonight's set apparently got them an immediate offer of another show.) The band is the



brainchild of pop mogul Wayne Davidson<sup>[15]</sup> and has Wayne and three women on vocals, keyboards, percussion and backing tapes. The music is electro-pop that pays deep and sincere homage to the golden early '80s era of the stuff and is really good in itself. Most of the music is on the tape; the band sing, tap keys, mime the percussion really badly (keeping in time is for videos — this is a show, dammit!), shuffle a few dance steps, shoot toy light-up ray guns at the crowd, throw lots of sweets (cue mad scramble on floor. Wayne: “*We know we can buy your affection ...*”), throw a beach-ball around the room ... basically show that they're there to have fun. I suppose it is the sort of thing you bring out once a year. Comparing this with the bands immediately preceding and following is a strong argument against the conventional 'rock' setup — this isn't poker, so two guitars, bass and drums doesn't automatically beat two keyboards, props/videos and a tape. Lighten up.

The above were the two good bands and, as it happened, the ones I wanted to see. **Red Textas** have a good name, but that's about it. A mediocre three-piece I can't be bothered categorising. Y'know, here I am trying to have a conversation and this band insist on playing. The **Earthmen** had poo for a mix, but that's probably a good thing — music and clothes were like a bad newspaper article on 'grunge'. Having the Earthmen follow Stinky Fire Engine seems almost contrived to make 'rock' look lame and useless. The **Sugargliders** were an OK pop band, but too precisely what I'd expected — reasonably accomplished indie-pop to the Summershine/Sarah stereotype without an actual spark. They were easier to talk over than the Earthmen.

Spoke to Bart over the Red Textas and Iain MacIntyre over the Earthmen and Sugargliders. What an excellent happenstance, having failed to contact Iain before coming over. Mapped out the epic *Party Fears* wank for *Woogy*. Also spoke to someone who was just bogged down in hatred.

Incidentally, people sat on the floor (early on, when the floor wasn't full) and watched and applauded, just like they do in Perth. So no shit on this, please.

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#### Day 14: Saturday 8th January

Lunch with my boss and his wife. (I work in Perth, but he happens to be a consultant from Melbourne; temp worker with temp boss in an important function actually works out quite well in terms of office politics.<sup>[16]</sup> Hell, it took me a whole six months there before I started counting down the days 'til I either quit or killed a co-worker.) Went to his place in Box Hill and then to a goddamn gorgeous spot way up the Yarra for a pricey lunch I didn't pay for. What a corporate cocksucker, hey? This sort of thing is *not* supposed to be what you do on holiday ...

Spent the afternoon and evening in bed with a cold, occasionally shuffling down to the petrol station or 7-Eleven for Mountain Dew. This *definitely* isn't supposed to be what you do on holiday.

#### SUNSET STRIP / FREeloadERS / ATTILA HUNNY — Punter's Club, Melbourne, Saturday 8/1

Pub guy on phone was a lying prick. “*Yeah, Sunset Strip are on second. Yeah, real soon now.*” Rush down (sick as a dog and pumped full of drugs — if I'd had any detectable brain I'd have gone to bed at seven and stayed there) past all the beautiful people caféing in Brunswick Street (I was honestly wishing we'd gone via back streets to avoid 'em) and arrive in time to catch just about all of **Attila Hunny**. Funky bluesy shit with organ, and I do mean shit. We sat around near the pinball machines. Sipped lemonade and

tried to keep breathing.

The people here (the girls definitely) are dressed ‘up’ and ‘fashionably’, which *is* to say gratuitous flares and platforms. I suppose it’s a good thing to see fashion victims at a genuine-article rock’n’roll show ... the two crowds did cross over in Perth maybe eight years ago, but no way now. These are the people you’d like to strap down and play good music at, so I suppose seeing them show voluntarily is a good thing. As long as they paid to get in and don’t get in the way of the *righteous* folk.

The **Freeloaders** are three ex-Philistines and one ex-God and play Detroit. Woo woo.

Bart tells me that my two-week stay just happening to include a **Sunset Strip** show was God at work — “*you could have come for a month before Christmas and missed ’em.*” I love the Sunset Strip and resolved not to leave until the ambulance-men actually came to drag my blood-coughing form away. And even then I’d demand to hear the end of that song at least.

Warwick Brown looks uptight as hell, but I would guess he feels pretty fine about the world and the Strip, particularly the latter. Andy Turner just exudes niceness — I’ve rarely seen someone project such an atmosphere of ‘What a nice guy!’ while rocking out like that. It took me a while to work out that it was Tim Hemensley on bass, ’cos he was so much more pleasant than at the Powder Monkeys show ... I guess he’s around good influences here. (And wasn’t pissed.) Drummer Michael Glenn is from Hoss.

Um, what can I say? They played and played and played, and I was actually glad of complete sobriety — let’s face it, the main function of alcohol at a show (not counting payday or the end of a hard week) is to try to tell yourself you’re not as bored as you are, and there was no need for that here as you could concentrate all attention (*had* to concentrate all attention — every bit of perception you could muster) on the finest details of the finest sounds coming straight from Heaven to you. The Sunset Strip are the greatest. I’ll be telling my grandchildren about this one.

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### Day 15: Sunday 9th January

Spent the morning dragging myself (Lou helped) ’round the city shopping for presents (a heart-shaped box of potpourri for Mazz and Dazz and CD covers for Leisal) — and *went on a tram*, tourist thrill, woo woo (a bus on rails, yeah) — and the afternoon packing like a loon. Maria, Darren and Leisal dropped me at the bus terminal and I seated myself next to a Malaysian student tourist debating nerd. (His favourite subject of conversation was the lack of censorship in Australia; but was his main concern the opportunity to discuss democracy, society, meaningful protest, history, freedom of thought/speech/association/religion, quality of life? No, he hovered around the pornography racks at all the roadhouses, looking like he was afraid he was going to get spanked.)

3-RRR gives out all in one go — you’ve got it, then you’ve lost it (just as the goth show was starting, too!) — somewhere just over a hundred kilometres north along the Hume Highway. I was astral-travelling by then, sinking gratefully into the rest so cruelly denied me all day. The Ampersands tape was pleasant and blotted out (*b*) any chance of conversation with Mr Student next to me (he got me later), but, more importantly, (*a*) the Elton John tape the driver saw fit to play at non-subliminal levels to make up for the (I can hardly believe my luck) non-working video. Even when I fell into semi-unconsciousness during side two (and started hallucinating to the lyrics) and switched off, *damn* those headphones made fine isolators. The Bus would turn even the most gregarious social moth into a glowering loner.

If there’s all these bushfires, why is it so bloody cold?

The bus companies have *got* to get a kickback from the roadhouse at Albury. We were told over and over about the restaurant and how “*you gotta go straight in to get your order at the restaurant, hurry, hurry, hurry,*” but not a word about the front petrol-station bit, where there is lots of nice crappy food real cheap instead of the mediocre-mediocre food at exorbitant prices in the restaurant. Nine twenty for one bit of fish and what would be a dollar’s chips in the real world ... yeah, right.

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### **Day 16: Monday 10th January**

Arrive at 5:40 a.m. and was taxied (by what I later discover to be the most circuitous route possible on two maps) to the famous Abercrombie Street mansion of Sir Ian of Underwood, a fine fellow and host. Also resident were Sir Russell of Hopkinson, owner of a Sega MegaDrive (hence cub reporter for *Hyper*) and all hyped up for his new position with You Am I (today was first rehearsal since the Beasts support in December, and it was heartwarming to see his enthusiasm level rise steadily as the week’s practice progressed — “*Hey, just had the best jam!*”) and two others called Scotty and Glen. The house was also notable for a fine photo board and a large Banana In Pyjamas wearing a St George scarf. I’m sure the hot water system was grossly illegal, but it suited my purposes.

Louise got in (by *plane*) that afternoon and we went a-journeying through Newtown and into Enmore.

Newtown is a planet unto itself. It’s a *different place*. You could very easily stay in Greater Newtown all the time and never, ever leave. There’s venues, shops, bookshops and even a handy university. (No cool record shop since Scratches died, however. And Louise says Scratches wasn’t cool anyway.)

It’s a pretty PC sort of place, and those places are always nice to live. A visible gay and lesbian populace, which helps keep airborne testosterone levels down. Lots of punk culture still about. There’s lots of quasi-Situationist<sup>[17]</sup> graffiti, which is one of those things you think’d be really cool to have all over the place (to make Joe Suburban-Corporate pause and *think*, man) until you see it in the world and realise it hasn’t instantly brought about the Transformation of Society. Oh well.

The park opposite the Victoria Hotel in Enmore (hence Vic On The Park) has astroturf underneath the kids’ stuff.

Somewhat surprising to find that Newtown does actually shut at night — I thought real cities had convenience. Doing the shop-your-way-through-Newtown thing by day is significantly more fun than the same thing in Perth, however.

There is the odd delight of place-name recognition (Newtown! King Street! Cleveland Street! Marrickville! The Hub!<sup>[18]</sup> These places are in my *record collection!*). It’s weird how familiar Sydney seems, in some subliminal sense.

I guess it’s because Sydney is the centre of the culture industry in Australia and pumps out its own image all the time. (Note: I did *not* say centre of culture itself.) It’s like Los Angeles thinking that it’s the whole world because all the speech, music and images you buy come from or through there. This is the local market that all the ‘national’ media are actually aimed at. JJJ is a *local* station. You notice that people here speak with the *exact* accent you hear on television, not just something like it.

It takes about two seconds to take in Sydney's complacency as Top Town (see previous paragraph). Melbourne may be competing with Sydney, but Sydney isn't competing with Melbourne. Australia equals Sydney plus regional centres. Rock'n'roll starts in the inner city of Sydney, diffuses through the suburbs and disappears (though there's been this annoying far-southern town of late). Etc. Also, everyone in Sydney is in a hurry, whether they are or not.

Moving from the boredom of Perth to the excitement of Sydney is like moving from the boredom of the frying pan to the excitement of the fire. If you want an actual change of environment, go to Melbourne. Melbourne actually smells different to Perth, whereas Sydney smells the same except worse.

South Sydney City Council has recycling crates which are the same width as and twice the length of the Perth City Council ones and are just as useful for storing twelve-inch vinyl. *"Ahh, yeah, can we have another couple? The previous tenants must have 'em ... someone nicked 'em ... they burnt down ..."*

Evening: beers with Cameron from *Lemon* at some loser pub in Chippendale (next to Newtown). Nice. I'm not sure what licensed hours here are, but they're a fuckin' lot better than Perth's.

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### **Day 17: Tuesday 11th January**

Spent the day on a journey starting at Chippendale, going through Redfern and north through to the city centre, bloody-mindedly ticking off tourist attractions and getting shitty at each other. Oh well. Got sunburnt as well, which was a real surprise after the impossibility of such in Melbourne.

The city centre of Sydney is architecturally similar to the Perth one (apparently went through the same trauma in the sixties), with the monorail to make it even more hideous. Did the record shops to some extent. **Phantom** is average, though their in-house special productions (see *OtS* and *Drum* each week) mean you'll shop there a fair bit. **Red Eye** has two shops, shop one pricing everything at \$xx.98 (ninety-eight?) and shop two being the 'collector' shop, where I saw the same Madonna remix CDs that were selling for fifteen bucks (the proper price) in Melbourne four days earlier at forty dollars, fifty-five dollars and sixty-five dollars. Shop one does look pretty good selection-wise, though. Couldn't find **Waterfront**.

Far more to my interest were the second-hand shops. These are worth coming to Sydney for! The shops are **Lawson's**, **Ashwoods** and **The Pitt**<sup>[19]</sup>, located three in a row on Pitt Street a block south of Phantom. Excellent vinyl in good condition at reasonable prices. I bought up.

Went all the way up to the Harbour Bridge (woo woo), then the train home. Two-storey train carriages. If I lived in Abercrombie Street and worked in the city, this'd be fine.

Spent the evening at Lane Cove with the two friends of Louise who were the guardians of all her possessions. Due to their extreme debt, I will refer to them as 'Adam' and 'Phil'. There's a certain mindset that accompanies spectacular business failure: the feeling that money is a purely abstract concept that just keeps meaningless track in some pointless game of symbols. There's a *lot* of difference between having a thousand dollars and having nothing at all, but the difference between being twenty thousand down and twenty-one thousand down is next to nothing. Y'know, they're not even dollars any more. So

Adam got himself a day job in computer repair to pay his debts (“*In January, always go on a wage — you do about two or three hours’ work a day and spend the rest of the time sitting around* [\[20\]](#)”) and, when told he had to buy a car to do the job (and have a fifth of his wage taken to go towards paying it off), decided to shoot for the top: a Lancer GSR with electric everything, cruise whatsit, central doodle, wank turbo, four-wheel drive, four-wheel steering, anti-lock brakes and probably electric dick attachment. It only runs on premium unleaded (at eighty cents per litre, which latter fact Adam only found out after he got it) and is red, of course; apart from the absence of tinting on the windows — “*I decided to stop short of looking like a pimp*” — it’s really the ideal car for the near-bankrupt.[\[21\]](#)

Despite being Japanese-designed and manufactured, the Lancer GSR is precisely adapted to Australian conditions: driving around the suburbs of Sydney at one hundred and twenty kilometres per hour and scaring the shit outa your passengers. The four-wheel drive and steering and anti-lock brakes are not mere fripperies, as Adam is the Sydney driver you hear so much about. Also, this car is the *ideal* tool for going through the Harbour Bridge toll (two bucks going into the city) and waving a fifty-dollar note at the bloke with the words, “*Sorry, mate, haven’t got anything smaller.*”

The fires burnt down along the Lane Cove River and through the strip of bush/parkland across the road from the house, apparently getting within four hundred metres.

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### Day 18: Wednesday 12th January

Woke up this morning, looked outside and could see the air. Jesus. I know it’s the bushfires, but this isn’t something to give someone who’s been fed Sydney pollution stories. It’s apparently five times normal levels ... but I don’t want even a fifth of this.

Mind you, the asthma’s gone away. The petrol fumes are probably worse, but I seem to cope with them a lot better. Guess I’m a city boy.

Visited **Half-A-Cow** in Glebe, a tiny little room with a decent selection of books and comics and a very few CDs. (Don’t believe the hype — though it’s fine for what it is.) Also noted was the *Cherry Poptart* [\[22\]](#) towel on display, which fits in well with the ideological purity of the shop that banned *Lemon* for the nasty things it said about Club Hoy.

Spent the afternoon wandering around Newtown (*i.e.*, down King Street) of my own accord. There is a huge remaindered bookshop called **Gould’s** which would be hell to look for anything specific in but is excellent for a day (not an hour) of completely aimless browsing. Picked up *Wetware* by Rudy Rucker. Also, you know the photocopies of *Steal This Book* and *Do It!* that are presently in circulation? You can get the reprints they were copied from here.

Visited the medium-crappy Jewel supermarket above the Newtown train station; prices are actually okay — comparable to Perth — but Louise warns that you gotta check the use-by date on *everything*. Bump into Richard Corey (rock star) outside, wearing the old faithful Kryptonics 69 shirt. He says how he likes Sydney now, but hated it for a year at first. Why do I keep hearing Perth people say this?

## WHITE TRASH MAMAS — *Kinsela's, Sydney, Wednesday 12/1/94*

Went to Surry Hills, the exciting nightclub district (like a whole suburb of James Street), to this exciting rock'n'roll-nightclub-thing place (woo). The White Trash Mamas include Miss Monica<sup>[23]</sup> from the Prickles (C'n'W), who is trying to get into acting, and two actresses, one from *Home and Away* and one from *The Year My Voice Broke*, who are trying to get into singing. Is this where actors do their 'cred' band before trying to convince people that they're really doing a record for the music? We got a good table. (With Simon Day at the next one, no less.) The audience combined the beautiful people with *really* bloody ugly ones.

The girls just sing, but there are three guys (including Stephen "Bones" Martin, for all you indie trainspotters) who play the actual music. The dark-haired one (*The Year My Voice Broke*) had a sour and embarrassed expression like you would when you're doing something stupid for your career (we spotted her on the way in walking in barefoot holding a guitar that she didn't actually end up playing plugged-in), but the blonde one (*Home And Away*) got right into it and was real cool. She also sung a lot of songs with 'cunt' in them (e.g. "I Knew He Was A Cunt"). (Sounds like one for Donahue: *Women Who Say 'Cunt' And The Men Who Love Them*.) A lust song to Tex Perkins in there too. It was a fine bit of fun and okay if you *gotta* go out and there's zilch else to do. Louise loves 'em.

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## Day 19: Thursday 13th January

Another day spent following King Street, all the way to Erskineville, location of the old Lemon house (the famed House of Erko), complete with the view of the South Sydney industrial wasteland opposite (Sydney Park) that you'll have seen in quite a few music videos. Newtown dole office, a dump. The Hare Krishnas, whose Sydney arrangement is quite different to (and considerably more relaxed than) the Perth cattle-trough approach; guess they haven't done enough of a marketing push. And the other finest bookshop in my travels, **Black Rose Books**<sup>[24]</sup> — a non-profit anarchist bookshop that stocks all your favourites but at considerably lower prices (try \$22 for a Re/Search book or \$9 for Semiotext(e)/Autonomea stuff) and, of course, has a fine political and quasi-political selection (picked up a nice pile of Situationist pamphlets I've been after for a while). I suggest you stop there and drop a more-than-token present in the donations box — they're recovering from a fire-bombing (!) and deserve every penny. I didn't make it to **Jura**<sup>[25]</sup> this tour, but I'm sure that's fun too.

Bumped into our host Ian on the way back. He was drinking Pepsi Max. You know the ad: "*subbed it, shot it, sodomised it, grunged it.*" Guess what style of clothing Ian was wearing. Y'know, it's sad when an ad hits its target market.<sup>[26]</sup>

## SEAWEED GOORILLAS / MACE / HARPOON — *Vic On The Park, Sydney, Thursday 13/1/94*

Vic On The Park is a happy wander down King Street and Enmore Road from Chippendale. Alternately, you can take the bus. Heh. Like a wider, shorter Shents in dimensions. Stage is very large, theoretical capacity is 480 (estimated crush six hundred) and I think visibility would be okay.

We left early as the **Seaweed Goorillas** were on (got a bus to the Moon next morning, don't you know ... not to mention musical taste), but you may be interested to know that the first band, **Harpoon**, features the guitars of James McCann of the Heathens and Raindogs and Tony Rushan of the Kryptonics. Certainly the finest thing James has ever been in — his previous bands always struck me as the work of people with

excellent taste (Birdman, Alice Cooper, New York Dolls) but not so much original expression of that taste. I actually liked the songs. A whole lot. Imagine the Raindogs a hundred times better and you're getting the idea. The crowd was the Perth Kryptonics crowd of three to six years ago (here colloquially known as the 'Front End Loader crowd'); made me wonder why I'd come across the country. Lots of howdy and catch-up.

**Mace** are a hardcore-ish band who are almost there. The rhythm section is damn fine (the bass-player has the rock and moves on stage; the drummer is flashy *and* can keep time and shape the rhythm), the guitarist is a technical doodler and doesn't move and the (female) singer needs to jump around less and sing an octave up. Must be a lot better in the studio, 'cos they have a CD out already; I'd say they've got a lot of promise, but not enough to keep us from leaving during their set.

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### **Day 20: Friday 14th January**

Set the alarm to give me lots of time to get ready for the bus, and (can you guess?) the unspeakable lump of shit didn't go off. Woke with five minutes to spare ... no shower, quickly brushed teeth and did final pack and fucked off to Lou's crash-pad then bus terminal pronto.

Thought I was in severe luck as the bus was just about empty all the way to Canberra, but Canberra was where the bus packed for the journey through every pissweak hamlet from Sydney to Wagga to Mildura to Adelaide ... stopping at *every single one*.

My luck ran out in the video department also. What's G-rated and would appeal to people who take the bus from nowhere in the country to nowhere in the country? *The Man From Snowy River*, of course. I thanked my headphones once more and got heavily into my John Cale (live '86) and Nick Cave (live '90) tapes.

A nice delicate pissweak young woman who obviously had no life whatsoever sat next to me for a short hop from Wagga Wagga. Rather than watch the video, she is reading her Bible. She keeps glancing up and around like the Devil is about to tap on her shoulder and whisk her away to Hell at any moment. (I suspect she might as well be there.) I *gotta* sneak one of these anti-Rock'n'Roll tracts into her bag. (Evangelist Danny Luttrell: *Rock & Roll The Devil's Revival?* — sterling classic.<sup>[27]</sup>) I think she's got a few tracts in there herself.

The Christian got off before I could enlighten her to the evils of rock music. The next companion (who, by way of generic conversational opener, started telling me about how much he hated Asians and Abos and ... I coulda just killed him there, but life is too short and there's too many of the fuckers and anyway I might get caught, so I just grunted and shoved the blessed isolation-phones on again) got off just before Mildura, whereupon an obnoxious nerd got on and started loudly complaining that he couldn't read because the reading lights were switched off. I explained it was one a.m. and I'd like to sleep; I don't think he understood, but he did shut up.

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### **Day 21: Saturday 15th January**

Robert Brokenmouth met me in Adelaide at 6:30 a.m. with chicken and champagne. I consider this excellent hospitality for weary travellers and recommend the idea highly. We spent a happy (early) morning talking shit and talking more shit; Robert took me to the exciting Myer's arcade with the rollercoaster on the top level (cool as! Wasn't running at seven, thank God, but sure *looked* nice) and showed me where the exciting hole he worked in was. Cool. Adelaide and Perth are too similar. I know they're nothing like each other *really*, but there's something *horribly reminiscent*.

Getting on the bus to Perth, a Mr Neanderthal had his luggage sitting in the middle of the road. Everyone else had cleared theirs off, but for him the bus he was blocking had to toot. Mr Neanderthal gave the driver an abusive mouthful (not a very creative one, but they didn't have literature back then) while Mrs Neanderthal tried to calm him down. Get on bus to wonderful scene of Mr and Mrs Neanderthal trying to work out how to cram an outsize piece of hand-luggage into the overhead rack. Duh ... dis way?

Met two nice people at Port Augusta ("*Ass-hole, South Australia*" — Robert B.), Julie and Emma, both on the reverse journey. (Howdy.) Julie is another friend of Liana's, a goth with a pierced lip and hair consisting of a pile of blue dreads coming out of the top of her head. Which I guess makes a fairly effective bus isolator. Julie was stuck next to a crazy man who hated women and was screaming out and ranting at everything; Emma stopped him from hassling her. I'm glad I didn't run into any bus crazies this trip.

The Bus would send any aspiring novelist into paroxysms of joy at the stereotypes present in the flesh. (See above re: social moth, glowering loner, transformation.) The guy next to me for this leg is a young metal loser who doesn't shave yet. He spends his time writing pages of what look like apocalyptic heavy metal lyrics (badly spelt), has copies of *Guitar Wanker* in the magazine rack and cassettes (two in total) of Metallica and Deep Purple. He decided at Port Augusta that it'd be a great idea to take his boots and socks off. We're right in the back, mind you, and let me mention again that the air-conditioning recirculates. Beautiful. The boots are slip-on; guess he didn't want to make it too hard for himself.

The video was working for this leg of the journey. Two were actually M-rated: *Bird On A Wire*, featuring Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell (crap, of course) and *Ghost*, featuring Patrick Swayze (soon to be killed) and Whoopi Goldberg, who is the best thing in it ... also included the word 'fuck', which surprised me for a bus video. I came out of my shell for the second half. Next was some hideous Christmas production, which I went straight back in for. Primevils and Bloodloss live '86? A much better idea.

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### **Day 1,000,000: Sunday 16th January**

I haven't showered or shaved since Thursday. (And there's no fuckin' way I'm paying two bucks for ten minutes of hot water! Well, not yet.) This bus sucks. The identikit roadhouses suck. The jerk next to me sucks. One of the finest features of cities is the potential loneliness in a crowd — you can buy the pleasure of locking yourself away from the losers and seriously *cultivating* your contempt. Tell you what, a good bus ride'll reassure you that you really *are* better than everyone else. I'm being as rude as I can to the loser kid next to me just for the sake of it — borrowing his guitar magazines (one had a column trying to get across to muso-wankers what the point of 'punk rock' is ... written by a member of King Missile?!), asking him for sweets. Some people were just born with a bull's eye on their forehead. I want to force him



to listen to some of my tapes. Jerkoff.

The roadhouse remaindered-paperback rack (my favourite source of reading material these days) has a Ballard (*The Kindness Of Women*) and I am broke. Fuck.

My lift meets me at the terminal in East Perth and ferries me home. Set up the precariously-transported CD player and test it. *Trumpets* by Club Hoy: yep, works just fine. Shower, shave ... iron a shirt. Work tomorrow.

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### Things I Learned On My Trip:

1. No record shop I saw came close to House Of Wax for power of obscurity and knowledge. (Well, OK ... Au Go Go.<sup>[28]</sup>) Count yourselves extremely lucky, kids — Kim deals with hundreds of distributors on an ongoing basis for *you*.
  2. This year, Melbourne is Rock City.
  3. Perth door charges are outrageous, particularly considering what the bands actually get paid.
  4. The traffic isn't *that* bad over there.
  5. For Melbourne, arrange a car (and buy a pocket Melways) or you'll regret it. Sydney isn't somewhere I'd take a car.
  6. If you're bored to tears with Perth and want a complete change, go to Melbourne. Perth people who go to Melbourne feel like fish back in water ("*where have you been all my life? ... Where have I been all my life?!*"), whereas Perth people in Sydney take a year or so to acclimatise.
  7. I'll see you in Melbourne in several months. (And I know I've said that and many other things before ...)
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**Thanks and howdy to:** (*namedrop, namedrop*) — *Mine hosts* Darren O'Shanassy and Maria Poletti (*Melbourne*) — *mine hosts* Ian Underwood, Russell Hopkinson, Scotty and Glen (*Sydney*) — Robert Brokenmouth — Bart Cummings — Louise Dickinson and Arlo Hound (*my intermittent travel companions and tour guides*) — Justin Dickinson *for the car (thank you, sir!)* — Beth Dickinson (*Lou's mum*) — Paul Elliott (*and Mark Gorham for the excellent bookshop*) — Liana Ferndale — Leisal Florien (*who spent a year nagging me to visit her*) — Simon Grounds — Kim Lester (*Ampersands*) — Lora MacFarlane (*who was in Perth when I was in Melbourne and in Melbourne when I was in Sydney: poverty jet set!*) — Iain McIntyre — Joanne Mihailov (*twice missed meeting up with you by thaaat much ...*) — Ian and Greg Wadley — Andrew Withycombe — Ben Butler (*a man with a mission*) — Julie, Emma, Samantha, David (*nice folk on the Perth-Adelaide and Adelaide-Perth legs*) — *ex-Perthians* Richard Corey, Peter Kostic, Tony Rushan, Matt Snashall (*just four of the Perth Sydney mafia*) — *cheers*.

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[1]Thanks to Lou for these.

[2]Any info on available records or reissues greatly appreciated! I have the *Abstract #6* LP magazine and had (but let slip) the *Factory Quartet* album ... please write.

[3]*Generation X* by Douglas Coupland, Abacus 0-349-10331-3, \$14.95 most places; readily available. Any PF reader would get right into it. (Unless you're running out of patience with middle-class kids who think they have problems, but never mind.) You and everyone you know can be found in this book.

[4]Semiotext(e) 0-936756-85-3; \$15 at an independent bookshop *if* you can find it (mine was the one and only copy at the Arcane Bookshop and I saw one at Polyester), else send SASE (or two IRCs, I guess) to 522 Philosophy Hall, Columbia University, New York NY 10027, USA for list.

[5]New one: *You're Standing On My Hula Hoop Productions*, 66 Newry Street, North Fitzroy 3068; SASE for catalogue.

[6]The most disgusting thing I've seen in rock'n'roll culture is the limited-edition sleeve of "Headache" by Big Black. Collectors get everything they deserve. You *don't* want a copy, kids. Although the booklet is good.

[7]In a particularly intelligence-insulting move, the 1993 Hot One Hundred didn't let you vote for whatever you wanted — no, you had to select from the list of JJJ-playlisted songs they gave you. Keep the market under firm control, now.

[8]Update 8/94: the jeans are no longer present.

[9]Apropos of nothing: asked hi-fi advice from Mr Grounds (who should know) and he says that if you *have* to have a CD player (he doesn't), get a NAD — superlative tracking and conversion. No multi-disc changers, but for those you might as well go Sony. The best Sony is as good as a NAD costing half as much. Hope this is of use.

[10]Whoa! Fourth album *Short Poppy Syndrome* out already, though I'm not sure whether it's the tape Bart had. Purchase, treasure, idolise ...

[11]*Spill*, GPO Box 2637, Melbourne 3001; SASE for catalogue.

[12]"I've moved from the demolition house now ... the dust and noise became too much ... Most of my time is taken up with *Spill* or New Waver stuff, mostly running around doing shit work of the type you apparently do for PF, as described in the new *Woozy* ... Incidentally, I never eat out, but am currently addicted to chocolate (about 300-400g/day) and coke (about 500ml/day), so it's nice to live near a 7-11 ..."

[13]No, a PC is *not* just as good these days really for desktop publishing, *i.e.* page layout (but they still make excellent typewriter substitutes), unless you happen to have a 'good' one just sitting around and have already bent your brain into the weird twists and turns needed to work the thing properly. Or have a large supply of antacid tablets to go. The only people who think otherwise are terminal nerds for whom technical power over a machine that barely works at the best of times, when they should be pumping out zines, is the closest they ever come to happiness. You, on the other hand, should save yourself an ulcer. Alternately, use a typewriter. Or *handwriting!*

[14]I don't mean the big production numbers (*B-Side*, *Bucketfull Of Brains*) or their direct emulators (*Party Fears*), but mainly all the fluff of few-issue wonders ... back then, either you looked like shit or you worked your butt off not to. Huh. Don't know they're *born* these days.

[15]*Toytown*, PO Box 295, St Kilda 3182; SASE for catalogue and then all your money for everything in it. In fact, you should just send all your money and feel privileged should they deign to send you something. As underground as the international pop underground gets. You won't regret it.

[16]What I did for a living: dressed in a clown suit, went to work, did some stupid and pointless bullshit (I got quite good at it) and also did all my laser printing and photocopying (mainly a ton of *Lemon #16½*) and got paid lots of money every two weeks. Which has its nice points, y'know.

[17]"What's a Situationist?" The official Situ line on this is to call the question meaningless. What I mean here is the sort of art designed to throw a spanner into the works. (In the present day, the 'works' have adapted to the capture and sale of spanner-images, making the task more difficult — a good example of an evolutionary 'arms race'.) Further reading: *Vague* magazine; anything on Jamie Reid's work with the Sex Pistols, unless it's by Greil Marcus, who doesn't know shit about shit; *Re/Search Pranks!*; anything else that looks interesting. And remember: it's not proofed against being taken wrongly and stupidly, so take all commentaries with a sack of salt.

[18] Note that two of these are John Kennedy songs, neither of which I could get out of my head when in King Street or Marrickville.

[19] The Pitt has since shifted its record stock to Gould's in Newtown and Leichhardt.

[20] *i.e.* on the Internet.

[21] Just heard about Adam and Phil's latest toy — a *hired* heater with a *remote control* ... Makes you wanna go broke, really.

[22] A comic whose central character is a large-breasted blonde girlie-thing who spends all her time having sex. Yeah, it's classy as hell. The towel features her in a bikini, which is two items of clothing more than usual.

[23] Miss Monica may be seen in the video for "Berlin Chair" by You Am I, with P.J. (*a.k.a.* Meat-Tray), a regular from the Prickles' shows, in the silver suit; the band wanted P.J., but he wouldn't do it unless Miss Monica came along. Single-shot vids are the coolest, non?

(*Late Note:* Miss Monica has skipped the country. The Prickles now have a new "Miss Monica".)

[24] *Black Rose*, 583a King Street, Newtown 2042; SASE for catalogue.

[25] *Jura*, 110 Crystal Street, Petersham 2049; SASE for catalogue.

[26] Says he got into the Max because his girlfriend's household lives on the stuff. But still.

[27] "*In our major cities, the drug addicts brag that long hair is a badge of drug usage. Some wear it to attract other homosexuals into 'gay' parties or pornography-filled [sic] places of immorality.*" I knew all rock'n'roll was homosexual, but ... Send US\$5 for a thousand to Old Paths Tract Society, Inc., Shoals IN 47581, USA (tract #T4-125).

[28] Barring zine gaffes (snicker).

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[ [Party Fears #19](#) | [Party Fears](#) ]

# Dave Graney and/with the Coral Snakes

## *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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*Saw Dave Graney with the Coral Snakes in late '93, playing to the fame of Night Of The Wolverine. We went two nights running. It's always interesting seeing one of your completely unpopular favourites just after the masses have caught on — will anyone get it? Will the band play up, talk down, dumb down, take the piss, try to enlighten or what? As it turned out, Dave was Dave and that worked just fine. The fresh young JJJ crowd all danced to "You're Too Hip, Baby". Or attempted to, anyway. (Feet planted one metre apart, shut eyes, wave upper half of body back and forth in time. Ain't it cute? Hi there to the girl in the green top on the Friday at the Grosvenor, if you're reading this. Come home with us tonight.) Congrats to the wag who shouted for "Gone Dead" — second Moodists single (1982), for those of you that aren't record nerds. (As Dave said in Juice: "Someone who collects seven-inch vinyl, that's someone you wouldn't want to hang around with, really ...") The ugly people present didn't destroy the quality — some things are too powerful to kill that way. The Coral Snakes shall triumph.*

*If it really is true that women just can't rock — that they just ain't got the rock'n'roll — then Clare Moore is a man.<sup>[1]</sup> Clare's grasp of the shuffle in the rhythmic jam drives the whole thing. Dave comes up with the tunes and words (and I must point out that he blows hot in literary terms as well), but this is only a foundation for the rhythmic interaction of the players. And boy, do the Coral Snakes interact with rhythm. Suave as all get-out.*

*I can only see a zillion Dave Graney records in suburban hells across the nation, filed right in there next to the Billy Joel, Cruel Sea and John Farnham (this was a real CD shelf), as a good thing. (Hell, the buyers both need and deserve it.) As long as the music's fine. Which it's more than. Any other consideration being grossly artistically unsound.*

*Note also that Night Of The Wolverine is now available in a proper jewel-box instead of a poxy fuckin' digipak. About time.*

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*Dave is the King of Rock'n'Roll Rock'n'Roll. He is also a top dude and a good talker. I love interviewing people who have opinions and talk in complete sentences.*

*This interview was done at the end of '92, when very little of the world cared what Dave Graney had to say. (They changed their tune soon enough.) Dave had just played an acoustic duo set with his guitarist on a Sunday night at the Grosvenor prior to his Nick Cave support on the Monday. And he held the more or less word-of-mouth crowd enraptured. Set was mostly Night Of The Wolverine, with long rambling explanations before each song. (The one for "Three Dead Passengers In A Stolen Second-Hand Ford" being longer than the song itself and rendering the actual lyrics superfluous — the song about the three people who die and the only things left of them are the affectations they put on to piss off the world ... nothing else. No other substance remains. Now, that's a scary story.) Yeah, the King. Gave him and Rod a lift to the train station after the interview — what a friend of the stars, hey?*

*Dave Graney is the sort of person you wish you'd had as an uncle when you were a kid.*

*David of Graney interviewed just before the hit album by David of PF.*

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### **Are you just doing the acoustic show on this Nick Cave tour?**

*"The Coral Snakes are playing in Melbourne, but everywhere else is just the acoustic show. Just to go*

around and be Dave Graney in a cheaper way. The acoustic show is quite good, but it's a much better show with the whole band. I do prefer to have drums and piano there. On Wednesday we do a show in Melbourne with the Cruel Three as the Soft And Sexy Sound, which is me, Clare (*Moore*), Rod (*Hayward*) and Robin (*Casinader*) who plays piano and violin; Clare just plays with brushes, it's with acoustic guitar, no bass and we do different songs. It's also easier to transport because we just need a piano, two guitars and a few drums.

"We just like to play wherever we can. I think next year (*1993*) we'll just be doing the Coral Snakes show because people get wise to it — they think they can get Dave Graney solo cheaper. They're going to have to pay next year. Everyone's going to pay next year, 'cos I'm entering my '*fuck it*' period."

### **How representative was the material last night?**

"After these Nick Cave dates, I'm going to record this record to put it out next year. It'll be a lot of those songs. I was going to approach it as a solo thing and keep all the songs really simple as they were when written on a guitar, and also do things that are a little off-the-wall, because I just think, '*fuck it, I'll be as Dave Graney as I wanna be.*' I'm going to record it fairly quickly.

"We play a lot in Melbourne and I don't fall into any particular category or scene in the continuum of post-punk; I get people from different scenes that don't cross over very much. I don't go out very much; I went to one gig by a kind of techno group and I didn't know those kind of people existed ... a very young audience. So I'm my own tribute act in Melbourne.

"Last night wasn't very representative of the show we've been doing with the Coral Snakes. I used to do a lot of talking, and you can't do it ... we do a serious show in some pretty savage pubs; I don't like the pace of that any more, and I don't want to be a clown any more. So we've been developing a really stomping rhythm & blues show, which is really like search and destroy, kick out the jams style that just doesn't stop. That's the kind of show I like to do with the Coral Snakes.

"I guess last night was representative in a little way of what I do; I like to do those sorts of ballads, but generally I like a little bit of firepower."

### **Will this record be the Coral Snakes?**

"Yeah. Everything I do now will be the Coral Snakes. I write a lot of songs — much more than I'll ever record — and when I first started thinking about it a year ago I was trying to focus it on more of a Dave Graney kind of thing, but then I was thinking that I've been playing with Clare Moore for more than a decade, and she's a very musical person, and Rod's been playing with us since 1988 ... so, although I write and arrange the songs, I bounce ideas off people all the time and everything I do is really the Coral Snakes. A lot of things get focused on me, but I'm through with that kind of, um ..."

### **You're a bit of a pop star. You got up there and you were a star — people liked your personality. They were music fans, but there was no reason not to entertain.**

"I've developed that kind of thing. A lot of my songs were pretty sad, so I had this thing when I started playing that I'd do a lot of talking. It was also so that we could play slower songs in pubs — instead of going straight from a fast one to a slow one, there'd be a person talking to settle into that kind of thing. But, as I say, I've grown tired of being a clown. I was never really up there getting drunk and being a fool; people do come along and want the sort of show where I'm a bit of a wisearse, and I don't feel like it sometimes.

"Increasingly, I like just playing the songs — keeping that distance and just playing the songs. I enjoy that most, really. I'm not the kind of person who has to stand up on coffee tables if ever there's a group of friends around. I don't have to be the centre of attention and I don't have to create drama in my life to make sure I'm alive.

“I’m very, very interested in, and I write lots about, the tension between music being a very private thing and a very public thing. The way people talk on MTV and on radio about ‘golden oldies’, a shared thing of a group of people; but it’s often at its most powerful when people are very private and vulnerable and the music is also created at its best in that fearless abandonment to others.

“This album was to be called *Night Of The Wolverine* because I have a long song which is about this kind of thing, inspired by this friend of mine who sells concrete in Adelaide and is a very closed, hard person. He’s always been a very funny guy. But people mistake my sense of humour — I often think things are funniest when they’re very serious, and I have lots of gags where I’m very serious, and this is a very serious collection of songs. So I’m not going to call it that any more, I’m going to call it *Music For Colourful Racing Identities*. I think that’ll capture it, because I’m also increasingly interested in Australian things. I was reading this guy in the paper saying how he didn’t know why the Mafia godfather, the ‘*Teflon Don*’ on trial in America, why these people always admit they’re in the Mafia; why can’t they be colourful racing identities like we have here in Australia?”

**I’m sure people have won libel cases for being called a ‘colourful racing identity.’** (*Send any information to PF now!*)

“I think it’s something to be, a colourful racing identity. I went to the races last summer in Melbourne. I go to the football in Melbourne, but people don’t dress very well at the football — it’s a winter thing, and they’re losing all the traditional grounds in Melbourne so a lot of the games are at Football Park, which involves a lot of travel for most people — so they get up early on Saturday morning and just put these fucking beanies on ... But you go to the races in the springtime and it’s great — guys with great safari suits, dapper old fellas with twirled moustaches — and you see the stewards of the race meeting who all look like the cast of *Homicide*, y’know, and they have to go up into this little cubby-house and watch the race ... they all have to wear pork-pie hats, for some reason. I’m not much of a gambler; you have to have a few bets, I guess, but I’m pretty hopeless at it. It’s a great day out just looking at people at the races.”

**Coral Snakes versus White Buffaloes — what are the two different entities, and to what purpose?**

“The first record I made (*At His Stone Beach*) was the Coral Snakes, done with some musicians in London and produced by Barry Adamson. I like that tropical feel. I’d spent four years in London and I just liked colourful things. I was reading a lot of American crime writing and one was this thirties book by Jonathan Lattimer called *The Dead Don’t Care*; and I was writing a lot of songs about sirens and beautiful girls, and it had this description of this Eurasian temptress dipsomaniac femme fatale which said, ‘*That was part of her allure — to be as cold and cruel and beautiful as a coral snake.*’ I like that kind of thing.

“I got more or less kicked out of Britain in 1988. I don’t have any British citizenship, I’m one hundred per cent Australian, so it’s difficult for me to live in another country. Unless you’re independently wealthy. I did stick there for a few years, though. I didn’t have any money to come back to Australia — I don’t have rich parents — so I had to get a job and earn the money, which is a very slow process in Britain. Conversely, it was one of the most creative periods for me; it helped me get away from all the Moodists stuff and helped me isolate what I wanted to do, that I actually got a kick out of playing music.

“When I got back to Australia, I was really, really excited and my mind just exploded with ideas about ... it was like a fucking storm, y’know. A lot of it was seen as a fascination with Americana, but I was seeing it as a collection of humours — some poem that’s got that in there. I wrote songs that had all this imagery of Custer and so on, but I was looking to a time when America and Australia were pretty formless kind of places; a time — which may never have existed — of freebooters, who weren’t like heroes and villains, it was just a period of great anarchy, and nothing had a name, and it was all incredibly ... it all came at me when I came back to Australia, so I was very excited.

“I wrote this song about Robert Ford and fame. Robert Ford shot Jesse James at twenty-one and became famous, and he went on stage and re-enacted it with his brother all around America. They went on the

stage for a long time shooting each other again and again. There were popular songs about them and everything. One was addicted to morphine and eventually hung himself, and the other was shot by somebody who thought Jesse James was a hero.

“But I had a curled moustache and people thought I was some sort of idiot who liked country music, and I thought the imagery of *‘the White Buffaloes’* was just too macho, so I changed it back to the Coral Snakes. I also went back to Britain to record with those people I did the first EP with, so I thought they were rightfully the Coral Snakes; and a lot of the songs I consequently recorded with them on *I Was The Hunter* were songs I’d been doing with them two years before. So that was why the changes of name.”

**This was the most popular question: what happened to the beard and moustache? You don’t have to answer if you don’t want to.**

“Like I said, I went along to this gig by this techno group, Def FX, and I was there to meet someone from Caligula, who were playing with them. And the whole audience was a lot of nineteen-year-old boys with these goatee beards. They’re things that young fellows grow to look older, to give their faces some order and character. So I just felt stupid and I felt like I had a mask on. And I’ve been reading a lot of things about Australian soldiers in Vietnam, so I just shaved my face and went out and bought a lot of polo shirts and nice slacks, because I liked that cool National Service look.”

**Don’t worry, your face has lots of character.**

“Thank you. I’ll tell myself that. It’s funny being in something like rock’n’roll ... You look at the development in American black music and it moves so quickly, generations move so quickly, and then you look at the aristocracy of sixties rock and Eric Clapton’s doing permutations of fucking ‘Layla’ year after year. He’s done so *little*. There are people like Van Morrison who do lots — perhaps too much — but think of whole generations of the faceless musicians of seventies disco. The Earth, Wind and Fire people, where the hell are they? Nobody sings their praises. Some of the greatest musicians ever. And the early days of hip-hop and rap. Afrika Bambaataa and the Renegades of Funk. Some of it’s terrific and they do the most amazing things. They move so quickly. But the world of classic rock goes on about fucking ‘Layla’ ... it’s flattering a large and indolent audience.”

**Whenever the local FM rock station does a request day, “Stairway To Heaven” beats the pants off everything else.**

“Even people who like Led Zeppelin can’t bear that song! I’ve been listening to a lot of reggae recently. I just buy compilations, because people say about dance music that people don’t have to have an emotional investment with the personality of the artist, it’s purely functional, but I find that really horrible about dance music.”

**The thing about rock is that the artist is the product.**

“Mmm, yeah. British music is totally to do with ... nobody is ever *hot* in Britain. Happy Mondays were, ’cos they were don’t-give-a-fuck dirty types, but it’s usually all alluding to things and using horrible words ... it’s all like *Carry On* to me. I do like a lot of British music, but a lot of it I don’t.

“But the seventies reggae I listen to, most of those guys are probably dead! Even though Rastafarianism is very anti ... pretty stone-age in regard to women and things like that, I like that they made a virtue out of the poverty, which is quite an aesthetic thing to do; to make that righteous is quite a popular revolt. I also like it because it’s also dealing with imperialists, against Britain and America. It’s a pretty exciting period. I don’t know whether I can get into much reggae ... I do like that part of it. Gregory Isaacs, Big Youth, the Heptones, anything with a nice tune. They’re all really good singers, too.”

**What label’s your next record coming on, after doing the live album independently?**

“I don’t know, I’m just going to do it. I just want to be in that situation. I gave Fire Records two of the best records they ever put out and they totally didn’t know what to do with them. It was a source of such great frustration waiting a year for *I Was The Hunter And I Was The Prey* to come out. It was the best collection of songs I thought I would ever do, and it was totally heartbreaking for me.

“It took a while to come out because Fire became involved with Rough Trade just as Rough Trade was going bankrupt, so they didn’t have a distributor for any of their records at all. I hate every act on Fire Records now. I know it’s stupid — I should direct my ire at the people involved — but, y’know ... I’m just glad to be out of it, really.

“I want to be in a situation where we own the tapes of our records. We own *The Lure Of The Tropics* and we want to own the next one too and just go at our own speed.”

### **What sort of sales level are you at?**

“Pretty low. The Australian music scene is very small.”

### **There’s all sorts of things wrong with it at the moment. It’s not a good time for individual music.**

“You walk into a CD store and anybody competes with thirty, forty years of recorded music. Things made before cassettes, y’know, and now they’re on CD. Very cheap, too.”

### **There’s lots of good stuff coming out, but you have to be prepared to search for it. People aren’t very adventurous now. Years ago, people’d check stuff out, have a listen, take a punt ...**

“Music is a rough game. That’s the way it is. I don’t envision any sort of utopia of music. It’s a rough game, and you’ve got to be rough and tough.”

### **Is the full Coral Snakes coming over to Perth?**

“With the recording coming out and some media attention, we hope to. We like to play as much as we can and going to different places is really invigorating for us. Everyone else is pretty depressed they couldn’t come over here.”

### **You came to Perth before with the Moodists.**

“Oh, *years* ago. It was very funny. At that time, around 1985, we were getting a lot of gothic people. It was funny because Perth was so fucking hot. It was forty degrees and you’d see these people in black overcoats and black hair.”

### **The Moodists were big with the goths — they didn’t understand the music, but maybe they liked the pictures on the sleeves ...**

“We didn’t *look* at all gothic. I remember when we played in London I’d be in white Levis and a surf shirt. The goths, we just hated it. We were driving to the gig in Perth and we drove around the block when we saw all these goths coming along.

“It’s pretty amazing when you see goths now. It’s a look like a teddy-boy or something; a look for the sensitive boys and girls of class. It’s a nineteenth-century British look from when the ideal of a woman was to be tubercular and anaemic and near-death; it means you’re not sexually dangerous because you’re not predatory, but ailing and consumptive.

“It’s a version of English psychedelia, strange and nineteenth-century, which all referred to childlike innocence, like what the Cure peddle to this day: how innocent childhood is and how evil the adult world is; a sort of pre-sexual state. I hate the Cure because Robert Smith obviously had a very traumatic time when he was seventeen, but he’s going to be forty quite soon. He peddles all that icky-bicky spider



bullshit ...

“*American* psychedelia was fucking tough — the Charlatans and the Quicksilver Messenger Service were my favourite ever bands. They were fucking tough.”

### **Do you still have goths in Melbourne?**

“When I see them, they look so staggering. They’re the sorts of girls who look striking, but they hate people looking at them, so they mooch around like, ‘*why are you fuckin’ looking at me?*’”

### **In Perth, it’s a move against the west-coast *ambiance*. Also, Perth is a very British town. There’s a Perth accent which is about half English.**

“Mm, you speak a lot like Bleddyn Butcher (*another Perth boy — ed*). The English music I like is ... things move a lot slower than the magazines that are like the nightclubs of Swinging London say they do. I like Jesus Jones because they’re like the Yardbirds to me, they’re creative in that way. The Yardbirds are an English group that I like. They were influential in their look on a lot of the modern British groups. None of them have any of their aggression, it seems, but I like Mike Jones’ voice on ‘Right Here, Right Now’. The Happy Mondays wrote some great music.

“I get out there in the shops. I buy a lot of CD singles. The new Kim Salmon, ‘Non-Stop Action Groove’, is very good. It has four really good songs on it. That’s the way they try to market music nowadays. The Straightjacket Fits. They’re a great live act.”

### **Your singing style: years and years ago it was very nasal (*Moodists*, *first Coral Snakes EP*), and last night you were really singing out of the diaphragm.**

“I gave up smoking about eighteen months ago. I think that was a good move. When I started playing acoustic shows, instead of just thrashing out songs, Rod and I picked songs like ‘I’ve Got To Have You’ and ‘Shiloh Town’ that have lots of space in them and open chords; you use the silence in them a lot and it makes them more dynamic. I found I had to learn to sing properly. I’m going to have to do that on the new recording because to do something that intimate you have to resist the urge to start yelling.

“Through playing guitar, I actually got to know keys of songs that suit my voice. B is a good key for me to sing in. I think I will re-record a lot of the Fire stuff. I think my voice has changed when we’ve been doing these sorts of shows over the last couple of years. I do like singing a lot. It’s a pretty physical thing; you have to be in training, it’s like being an athlete.

”Tex Perkins is a great singer, I think he’s coming into his prime. I think he’s done a lot of experimenting with different kinds of things and he’s becoming more confident. He’s a very fearless, natural performer; he’s got the rock action and the charisma like Bon Scott. Other people have tried to be tough guys, but they don’t have the natural, wiry kind of ...

“Tex is one of the few, me included, and Kim Salmon, who don’t come from an art-school background. I’m being classist about this. We don’t come from a scene of art students and being easy with expressing yourself; it doesn’t come easy to people who are from the wrong side of the railroad tracks. It’s not at all encouraged in this country. It doesn’t come easy to consider yourself as an artist, to separate yourself from the world and comment on it, when the world will just say, ‘*don’t be a fuckin’ whacker, fuck off, get back in your place.*’ That’s why I think Tex is like Bon Scott when he’s with the Beasts — he’s not *playing* at being hard and tough. Kim Salmon is very protective of what he does and, in that way, hard about what he does. There’s no ironic distance between us and what we do.”

### **And that’s why you shaved your beard off.**

“I have the same kind of thing, but I’m more playful and I think it’s funny. I have some ideas that nobody

ever understands each other anyway. I'm not pushing any barrow. My band is pretty solid, I'm pretty solid in what I'm writing and in our performance and we're pretty rock-hard. We're just in my 'fuck it' period.

"The key thing of the song 'Night Of The Wolverine' is '*I can't know what you mean, know what I mean?*' which I think is very funny. That, to me, is central to my whole performance and everything. The artist has to be that hard about who you're telling a story to. You have to demand impossible things."

**Communication of intangibles is your daily working substance and you just have to handle it. You signed up for this job. What do you actually do for a living?**

"I make my living doing market research stuff. It's okay with me, I don't have to deal with anybody. It's like fruit-picking, it goes up and down over the year, they pick people's brains. I come and go. It's all about adverts and things like that. I did the telephone survey thing once and after a while you assume an actor's voice and order people around.

"Everybody has to work in Australia, but people make such a song and dance about it. The ideal of an indolent rock star is very appealing to a teenager, but when you're just slave to your feelings it's pretty boring, really. I'm just gaining control of these recordings and want to see them released in America and Europe. Going at my own speed. If I have to have a day gig to allow me to eat the kind of food I like ... it's not exciting for me to have cornflakes for dinner."

**You did a couple of Fred Neil songs last night.**

"I had a record of Tim Buckley doing 'Dolphins' by Fred Neil and searched out this record of his. He's got a fantastic voice. He's like people I admire like Joe South. He did 'Walk A Mile In My Shoes' and 'Everybody's Talkin'' and 'Games People Play' and then just disappeared — he earned enough money to do whatever he liked, which was to not be in show business. He just went off to Florida. The Jefferson Airplane wrote a lot of songs about him. They called him Pooh Neil. He's got a lovely voice and a great jazzy brush-drums-and-tremolo-guitar sound. The songs are very easy to play, too; he uses the same chords all the time.

"And the other one, Jimmy Webb, who wrote all of his stuff before he was twenty-one. He's like a pop Rimbaud — 'Where's The Playground, Susie', 'Wichita Lineman', 'By The Time I Get To Phoenix', 'MacArthur Park' — he did them and just *fucked off*. He actually did some of his own records, like *The Yard Goes On Forever*. I admire those kinds of people."

**You've been in this music thing for over ten years now. What do the next five, ten, fifteen and twenty years look like for you?**

"I've tried other things. This fellow wanted me to write a film script with him and I tried to do that, but I don't like movies very much. He said, '*we'll do this and this, we'll get this money,*' and I'm always interested in money, but I don't think at all visually. I have friends who are artists and I go along to their exhibitions, but I feel like a complete buffoon. I don't know how to look at things. I'm not interested in it, really. I have a good memory for words and what people say and I read a lot, but pictures are all the same to me, really."

**Have you considered writing fiction?**

"Yeah, but I'm heavily into not expressing myself these days. I have this book called *The Rise And Fall Of A Regency Dandy*, about a contemporary of Byron's called Scrope Berdmore-Davies, who was just a quintessential dandy, which I like as a political movement. They were around after Napoleon's defeat. They were just men-about-town, but they weren't fops; fops were ineffectual decadent aristocrats and very effeminate, but dandies had very strict ways of dressing and became popular socially. Beau Brummel was the leader of them.

“He and Scrope Berdmore-Davies gambled — they didn’t work, they were like rock stars — but none of them had the money because they weren’t from rich families; through sheer force of personality they would walk around telling people to pick up their bags and getting clothes for free and so on; acting like aristocrats. They formed a rival aristocracy. I love the dandies.

“Both Scrope and Beau Brummel ran up huge gambling debts and didn’t have family money to fall back on and eventually had to go into exile. They had just lived very, very flamboyantly, way beyond their means; and Byron left behind his writing, but Scrope left behind a trunkload of unpaid bills for clothes and food and wine, which were discovered in a bank in Pall Mall in London in the 1980s. I think that’s so fucking admirable, that somebody just lived and didn’t return like a cat to its own vomit and have to comment on it. Just bills! I’d love to do that, but where do you go to now? Portugal? Seattle?

“The idea of writing ... it’d be okay, but why amplify the stories? I’m pretty ambivalent about expression. You’ve got to have some reason for doing it. I have actually been thinking about writing something, and if I did it would be something like Dennis Hopper’s *The Last Movie* — I would have to kick a *big* goal. I haven’t read Nick Cave’s book and I feel that I should; he’s always had an amazing sense of himself. In this country, that sort of thing is crushed out of people — children who show talent are usually just told to shut up and smacked a lot.”

**“Go out and play footy! You some sort of woofa?”**

“Football players are encouraged so much. I come from a family of football players. In a world where football players are given everything, there are a lot of wusses. I do admire Nick Cave’s sense of artistry; the courage of his convictions is very strong. Although he’s a very successful artist; and once you’re successful ... fuck, y’know, I could be a *very* nice guy if I were successful!

“I would maybe write something, yeah, but I really like to write songs. I would like to write songs for people, that kind of thing.”

**So why do you write songs? What’s the motive spark?**

“It’s usually a musical thing. Songs are nice, melodies are nice, mucking around with them ... words aren’t everything. Often I discover new chords. Major-seventh chords, I just love ’em. They’re very cheesy, cabaret chords. They always have one note in ’em that’s just wrong. Erik Satie, Paul McCartney. I write lots like that.

“I think next year’ll be pretty make-or-break for me. I’ll see how this next record goes. I can’t really survive, and it wouldn’t be much worth continuing, if I don’t get some action outside Australia. I don’t need my stuff to be verified by European or American eyes to make it real, it’d just make me a bit more economically powerful with a bit more control over my own life.”

**Any words for people in Perth who care?**

“I would like to come back and play properly and I think that’ll happen. We went to Adelaide this year and that was good, although Adelaide is a lot more insular than Perth. People there have much more of a chip on their shoulder and are sometimes actively disinterested in things that aren’t from Adelaide. I’m from South Australia. South Australia is my mythic plane. I understand South Australian people and their things. I sometimes get a train to Adelaide and South Australian people are very identifiable to me, as compared to Victorians.”

**But Melbourne is your home.**

“Yeah. South Melbourne is great, it’s the first place I’ve really liked living in for a long time. South Melbourne is very pretty. I can walk to the city or walk to St Kilda. St Kilda used to be a bohemian kind of suburb, though it’s not so much any more. There’s no youth culture in South Melbourne. None. It’s an

old community. It's got the old South Melbourne oval, which is just derelict and ghostly now. Lots of those grounds are like that — North Melbourne, Richmond ... Youth culture things just make me angry if I'm around them — those nouveau hippies and fucking cafés and bars ... I don't want to be angry like that all the time, so I don't live there. There are people in Melbourne who try to preserve the haunts of their youth, but they're just against change of any kind, really.”

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[\[1\]](#)This is a rant that was originally an album review footnote, but this is a fine place for it. The ‘women can't rock’ theory is usually advanced by those born-againists who believe that *true* ‘rock’n’roll’ is the sound of unlayable adolescent male sexual anguish to a twelve-bar blues, that all rock’n’roll is to be judged against this criterion and that unlayable adolescent males (fanzine editors; hip record shop assistants; other people of opinionation but no life) carry the Verdict in their sweaty, acned palms. Well, fuck ‘rock’n’roll’ then. (Insofar as it involves these people; remember, the *music* is never, not *ever*, to blame.) I dislike unlayable adolescent males even more than I do most people (just about anything socially tolerable about the male of the species varying in direct proportion to their distance from this, uh, ideal) (and before you start, I'm none too keen on most of the female half either) and certainly wouldn't trust, of all things, my *listening* to them.

I know this is missing the real point: that this sort of asocial *obsession* with art has generally been a male domain, women generally tending to be more interested in having a life. Of course, this goes on to the question of what degree of artistic asociality in women is tolerated by society, and how much space female glowering loners are allowed (not much) as compared to male ones (heaps) — can you imagine a female Warren Ellis feeling free to develop, for example? — etcetera etcetera, we could go on for hours. But remember that we're not discussing statistics; we're talking about amazing and incredible new sparks generated by *individuals* on a (by definition) unpredictable basis.

None of the above has much to do with Dave Graney and the Coral Snakes per se, but it does have a lot to do with music, that we need more of the *great* stuff and that any factor standing in the way of that needs to be dealt with.

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# A bit more pain in their lives: Dirty Three

## *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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**Mick Turner** — guitar

**Warren Ellis** — violin

**Jim White** — drums

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*The Dirty Three toured with the Blackeyed Susans over January and February for the convenient reason that Warren and Jim are in both bands. We popped along to see them and caught three songs running half an hour; turned out we'd missed the first number. Heh.*

*It's all instrumental (microphone used for rambling intros only) and wildly jams and rocks out brilliantly for ages. Warren is particularly inspiring — plays violin whirling wildly around and jumping about, beating the music outta the bloody thing (remember, by the way, that a violin isn't a solid lump of wood like a guitar and that violins cost, not a few hundred dollars, but a few thousand), with heavy effects and feedback — it took a while for me to work out it was actually the violin making that screeching screaming noise.*

*Pretty introspective stuff (in a very physical way ... if you see what I mean), but it satisfied the pure artistic bottom line. This is what music should be: the instrumental jam rising like an entity of its own from the rhythmic and melodic interaction of the players. And what goddamn great players, with a sense of music! (As Bernard put it: "So why don't more people wish their dicks were violin-shaped?") The crowd was mainly people who may have been gig-goers three or four years ago; they deserved it in full.*

*Interviewed by David at the Grosvenor on the Saturday afternoon after the show.*

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**Mick:** "We started about eighteen months ago. It all started because someone who ran a hotel saw Warren play one night and asked him if he'd do something down at his hotel, a small hotel called the Baker's Arms in Victoria Street in Abbotsford — he wanted some acoustic music, almost — so Warren spoke to Jim and Jim spoke to me, and we made up some songs and went down and played there every week for a long time."

**Jim:** "I'd been playing with Warren in a band called Busload Of Faith."

**Mick:** "We did the tape after eight months. We used to tape our rehearsals — which are very few and far-between — on a four-track, and we needed a demo tape to get some other shows, and it sounded good so we decided to sell it."

**Jim:** "There's been about four hundred, four-fifty of those, and a lot we gave away and some we sold."

**Mick:** "We're not selling those any more because we've just done another recording that's going to be a CD, with a few songs re-recorded from the tape. Some of the tape's coming out on a vinyl record on a Boston label called Poon Village."

**Jim:** "Yeah, they just found our tape. Apparently the tape went to New Zealand, then to New York or something, then this woman heard it in Jimmy Johnson from *Forced Exposure's* lounge and liked it and wrote a letter."

**Mick:** "We hadn't sent any away, it had just been copied and sent around."

**Jim:** “It was pretty funny.”

**Where did you learn to play violin like that, Warren?**

**Warren:** “I dunno ... I’ve been playing about two years now electrically with pedals. When I started out I had a guitar pickup attached with a rubber band and I plugged straight into the front of house. Then someone said I should use an amp — I don’t actually like the sound of electric violin or even electrified violin because there’s too many bad records around, but then I heard a Soft Cell album where this guy plays with an octave pedal and distortion and it sounded really good, so I started messing around. I’ve got a lot of things happening in there; I just run ’em all flat-out, ’cos I don’t know what they do, and it seems to work. Sometimes.”

**I’ve probably had a sheltered existence, but I’ve never seen someone beat hell out of a violin like that. Most people treat it like something that’ll die if you touch it. When we saw you, a friend dropped his jaw and mentioned how his violin was insured for ten thousand dollars. So how many violins have you busted?**

**Warren:** “Oh ... I’ve got one that I broke the neck of the other night, where the glue came undone when I hit it against the piano; it cracked once before, though I don’t know how that happened. The main thing I go through is bows, horse-hair — like, give me a horse! It’s about sixty dollars to get it re-haired. When I was running really badly, I was doing one bow every two shows. I use double-bass hair now, black stuff, which is coarser and tougher; it’s not quite as sweet-sounding, but it lasts a bit longer. And I changed my technique a bit — I used to really hack into it, but I’ve lightened up on my approach in the last couple of months.”

**So do you have a fantastically well-paying day job so you can pay your violin repair bills?**

**Warren:** “No, I just have a very sympathetic violin repairer. They’re really great at this place. I don’t have a job; bows and that I can usually cover, but when I cracked it I didn’t know what to do and they fixed it for me on credit. I use two violins now, so one’s in the shop getting fixed. That one’s a good one, about four thousand dollars, but I’ve just really fucked it now — there’s hunks out the side and it seems to chip quite easily. I might keep using the one I’ve got here because it seems a bit more solid. It’s an old German one. But I like the idea that it could break sometimes. It’s good.”

**It’s good to see someone treating a violin like a rock’n’roll instrument that you bash sounds out of. The violin’s been classicised to death.**

**Warren:** “The violin is ... I guess like the flute. I play the flute as well. I play two instruments that a lot of people think are disgusting. I played some flute on ‘Desensitised’ on the last Surrealists album.

“I like this guy Roland Kirk, who was this blind guy who played three saxophones at the same time and a flute with his nose. He’s about the best flute player I’ve ever heard, because he made it sound *big*. You could hear him spitting in it. It’s good when you can hear people getting really physical with stuff. I’ve got this beautiful recording of Kirk doing a tribute to John Coltrane the night Coltrane died. He does three tunes, then he goes into one of his own and he starts crying in the middle of it, he bursts into tears and he keeps playing, he’s howling his eyes out, and he’s got enough time at the end to grab a party whistle and go ‘*whooh!*’ at the end! So there are good flute players in the world.

“When we get back to Melbourne, we’re doing a show for *Nomad*. We’re not sure what it is, but we’re just avoiding playing in forests and that.”

**Jim:** “They won’t let us do it in a pub — they reckon it’s too boring and everyone does it.”

**Warren:** “I haven’t told you this yet, Mick, but Graham (*Lee*) has this idea that we should market the Dirty Three as a New Age band. Jim’s gonna grow a dreadlock and start wearing kaftans. We’re quite

aware that after this weekend's visit, Perth's population will double due to the unprecedented amount of love-children born as a result of our shows here."

**Graham Lee:** "The Blackeyed Susans prefer infanticide."

**Warren:** "Take a seat, Graham. Graham Lee will indeed be playing pedal steel reminiscent of his playing at the Big Day Out show; and believe me, Graham had a *big* day out. The main event of the Big Day Out was not Soundgarden or the Ramones, it was Graham Lee on the Esky."

**So what other bands are you guys in?**

**Mick:** "Jim and I are in Venom P. Stinger. We've just done some recording and we've got a seven-inch single out now on Death Valley Records. At the moment I'm filling in playing bass in Charlie Marshall's band The Body Electric, which Jim and Warren play in, while Brian Hooper's away with the Surrealists. The Fungus Brains have died."

**Did the Fungus Brains ever sell any records anywhere?**

**Warren:** "I bought one."

**Mick:** "Did you buy a Fungus Brains record? When?"

**Warren:** "Ages ago."

**Mick:** "Really? Before you knew me? That's nice for it. You never told me that. The first one sold out — there were three hundred made and it took six years and they're quite sought-after now, or they were at one stage — and I don't know how much the second one sold because the record company (*Monash Records*) closed down and we never saw any money from it and we don't know where they are, though the record's still available somewhere, and the last is still available from Frock Records (*PO Box 219, Newtown 2042*). There was actually a film clip for 'Let's Go Away' which was shown on *Rage*."

**Warren:** "It's got a puppet of you in it, hasn't it? Mick was away overseas so they made a big *papier maché* puppet of him that sits there. Looked fantastic."

**Mick:** "Looks like me, too. It's scary."

**Warren:** "I'm in The Body Electric. I'm in Kim Salmon's band S.T.M. that's been playing for a year and a half, and Kim's solo album is coming out in April (*eventually came out September — ed*) with about eight songs of S.T.M. on it. The Blackeyed Susans. I play on records a lot.

"I was in a band in Ballarat when I was about fifteen called Paranoid who played one show. The bass player's guitar never dried so he couldn't play it without getting paint on his clothes. Also, I hadn't worked out that a barre chord goes minor when you slide it down, so 'Roadrunner' sounded really weird. I sang with a band in Melbourne called Well who played for six or nine months, until the guitarist started going out with the bass-player's girlfriend. I played with These Future Kings for a couple of months and then one day I just forgot to go and didn't play with them any more. I played with the Slub for a while. I played in Busload Of Faith and I was thrown out of them for taking a piss during the middle of a show, though there had been a bit of internal friction in there as well.

"I started playing properly about two years ago. All these guys ... Mick Turner was just a hero in my scrapbook!"

**Yes indeed. He was in the Moodists, you know. What else is Jim in?**

**Warren:** "Jim is in all the bands we both play in and he plays on the Tex, Don and Charlie album. I played on one song on that too."

## How structured are your songs?

**Mick:** “Oh, they’re very loose.”

**Warren:** “When we played our first show, we had to fill up two hours and we only had five songs, so we just pushed them out and that became the norm. We have honed them down because we’ve got more songs.”

**Mick:** “Some of them’ll go for half an hour sometimes.”

**Warren:** “I think we did one song that went three-quarters of an hour. Fantastic. We’ve got a couple of short numbers ... it’s a fine line. Sometimes you’ve got to be careful because you might be really boring the pants off people.”

**Oh, if you were going to bore them they’d get bored in thirty seconds.**

**Warren:** “Last night was very interesting because it was definitely not a crowd of people who would have come to see us. The best comment of the night was one Graham overheard, when this woman said, *‘that was the most painful experience of my life.’* Now, that was good. Another guy yelled out, when I was talking, *‘You’re a shit!’* The image of a piece of turd sitting on the stage playing violin is really quite bizarre. Also, *‘don’t you know the words?’*”

**If that was the most painful experience of her life, she needs a lot more pain. If you’re not playing a three-minute pop song, it really confuses people.**

**Graham:** “A lot of people actually liked you.”

**Warren:** “I think there may have been some people who came to see us, but it was good because it worked and it’s good for people to get their heads around something they might not normally see. Get some *pain.*”

**It’s good to see musicians up on stage just rocking it out well, because it’s very easy to do it badly — “I shat it, it must be art!”**

**Warren:** “You have to be careful you don’t start sounding like Hawkwind or something.”

**Mick:** “Billy Thorpe on *Live At Sunbury* — ‘Oo-Poo-Pa-Doo’ went for a whole side. That was the worst record.”

**Warren:** ”‘In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida’, that’s the one we have to avoid.”

**Just remember that if CDs had been around in 1968, “In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida” wouldn’t have run eighteen minutes, it would have run seventy-six. What is it all about for the Dirty Three?**

**Mick:** “That’s *Three*, T-H-R-double-E, not the numeral ‘3’. The CD will be called *Blow It Out Your Arse* and will have us on the cover eating dim sims. This is to expel the New Agers.”

**Warren:** “I think there’s some discussion to go on this. I think you should buy our record just so that we can come back. Everybody needs more painful experiences.”



# Live (1992 Perth)

## *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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**RIDE / CALIGULA** — *Berlin, Monday 13/7*

Lots and lots of people made it to the gig — the tickets completely sold out. This was the place to be seen and a chance for the Perth indie-populace to prove that they were *real* indie-poppers. (*I always thought 'goth' was a better word — ed.*) If you didn't make it, you aren't a real one. There were lots of stripy shirts and long hair and, for the real fans, Ride T-shirts.

Sydney band **Caligula** were first up, and they were crap! They were trying to be a fusion of indie-pop, metal and funk — which shouldn't be too hard — but they failed dismally.

**Ride** were not necessarily 'live'. Well, maybe for one song they were. Going to the Ride concert was like listening to one of their records or hearing one played at a nightclub. Nothing specky. But Ride must have been good for some people — they even influenced a friend of mine's girlfriend to change from being a goth and think indie-pop was GOD. (*No, this just means she's caught up — ed.*) She started by dumping him *that night*, five minutes after they got there, and going off with a young and dready indie-popper. Too bad — I guess he didn't have the right amount of stripes on his T-shirt. I even saw young indie-poppers stage-diving, slam-dancing and pogoing. Plus, two young girls got up on stage to kiss Mark from Ride and then got thrown out. Danny had fancied her and was deeply disappointed when she got up and threw herself at this young boy.

The Rainyard and their groupies were right down in the front rows ... they were probably there to pay their copyright dues.

Ride played *two* encores. I admit I was surprised when they played the second ... but they'd stopped early. But a good time was had by all ... the indie-poppers.

I'm glad I didn't pay to get in — I'd never be able to live it down. It would ruin my street cred.

**Tank Rat.**

(*Ross Chisholm paid to get in — what does this do to his cred? ... And can you imagine him as a UK-indie-popper? I can't — ed.*)

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**CELIBATE RIFLES / THROMBUS / HOGFODDER** — *Berlin, Friday 10/4/92*

Finally got PF#18 to the printer today and decided to go out and celebrate. A coin toss led me to the Rifles

(I refuse to call them the Cellies) at the Berlin over Club Hoy at the Melbourne. I'm told the latter were great and the show was fun for all.

I, however, was at the Berlin, and — not having gone to a show here for nearly five years — had forgotten about the, ah, timing of club shows, and arrived at 9:30, hideously early ... an hour and a half of boredom waiting for the first band, at one of those shows where there are hundreds of people present and I know and want to know about eight of them — one of whom worked here and five of whom were playing. It's the JJJ metal constituency, more or less; you're entirely welcome to 'em. The boredom was alleviated only by a few minutes' chit-chat, in the course of which I learnt that a dear friend of mine has taken up smack as a recreational pastime. That really set the cheerful tone for the night.

Hogfodder eventually started. The songs are very basic and they're very young as a band (if not as individuals ... by a long shot), but further development will happen. Alan needs to relax more ... maybe move at half the speed.

Thrombus are a pop band, not anything else — thrashier and cleaner than last I saw them and lots of fun. They're good light entertainment ... they're not out to revolutionise the face of music.

The Celibate Rifles were my personal bright spot. In fact, they blew away the dull grey atmosphere and blew the place up and out completely. They were about one hundred and ten percent on what they were like at the Ozone last year, and they were no slouches then. The Rifles' records haven't radicalised my existence lately, but the live show is so unbelievably sharply focused and powerful ... This made the night worth it. I even stage-dove for the first time ever. Hooray. I was near falling asleep near the end (around two o'clock? too late for rock'n'roll ...), but that's not important.

Got home and discovered the cat had been locked inside and had crapped in the bathroom. That was really the cherry on top of tonight. Must toss coins more carefully in future.

### **HABITUÉS LAUNCH: YUMMY FUR / THE ELF KING — *Beat Room, Saturday 18/4/92***

I missed the Rainyard and both Bob's and the Hunkpapas have been in enough times for the moment; both were just fine. The other two bands need a bit of notice right now, however.

Yummy Fur have the makings of a youth-cult phenomenon. There are six of them, they are very young ... I could reel off twenty or thirty names that occurred to me, but all that would show was that I'd heard those records too. The sound is a sort of '90-'92 alternative pop mish-mash, tho' it's becoming much more individual and defined in the months since this show. They appear to bash together fragments so small as not to be worth tracing, bash it out and not worry too much about what they're doing ... being precious can come later, there's music to be done in the meantime. Check 'em out and get the tape — it's actually better than the live band.

The Elf King do not impress me. Mark One is wild about 'em, in which case I suspect brain damage. The primary comparison is Rick Wakeman. I speak with precision here. Bad theatrical prog-rock. No two ways about it, this is the music of the enemy. Nonetheless, it doesn't quite warrant the PF Jihad Ray™, despite such being standard in these cases; the Lame Gun is quite adequate. They take Rick Wakeman, bits of early Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath and a polka band, focus it through a Nina Hagen album (someone in that band owns and loves at least two Nina Hagen albums. Don't ask me why anyone would ever need more than one Nina Hagen album, or even that one) and if you played the result of that on a Casiotone you'd have a fair approximation of the sound.

This makes them sound more awful than they were. They're about one level above hopeless. I'm sure they're lovely people and all, though I wonder about their dancing friends and the way the latter flail about — people just *don't* dance that badly in public ... not after the third or fourth time they've done so.

Perth does not need this music.

**MUSTANG! / VACSONICUUM / BOTTICELLI'S ANGEL / PANEL VAN / SPICY BABY TOMATOES** — *Beat Room, Monday 20/4/92*

The white sheet was finally pulled over the face of Hardcore Punk for the *last time* in late 1991 (vanilla HC — its more flavoured descendants live on and even somewhat prosper); what this means in practice is that bands whose music descends therefrom ((a) the sub-poppers; (b) the funk-metallers) no longer need actively acknowledge or even realise that part of their music's ancestry, despite it still being a large chunk. They can run on the next stage alone for their own influences. (Doesn't mean they'll do it *well*, but it can be done.)

Thus, accusations of Red Hot Faith No Chili directed at funk-metallers are generally accurate. And simply saying "*Sub-Poop*" is both sufficient and accurate for bands like tonight's, and especially for their fans, who do indeed constitute a large chunk of the scene (per se). The effects of the Sub-Pop thingy of five years ago have finally spread, like ripples in a paddling pool, as far as the stages of Perth. Me, I will *never* own a check-flannel shirt, dread my hair or grow one of those putrid little Sump-Pump\* goatees. I hope you feel the same.

These fans are also about the most unresponsive goddamn sub-scene I've ever encountered; willing en masse to give a band a response of *total silence*. Neither applause nor catcalls. Even when the sump-pumpers are pumping their worst, spurting old, greasy black slime desperately in need of a 100,000 mile change out the PA (in the mistaken belief that this constitutes an increase in life and virulence — *c.f.* 'murk' last issue — rather than plain old mechanical wear), they have rarely warranted a response this bad.

And did the Spicy Baby Tomatoes get a bad response; entirely undeserved, I might add. I am informed (forget where) that they have some pure-blood HC in 'em, or did last year or so. Tonight they started with not a goddamn droplet of applause (except me) until they shifted from the good rockin' stuff to something more straight HC-ish. As the band said, "*I'd buy that for a dollar.*" Started (Danny says) with "Good Times" by Nobody's Children (old garage classic), which shows a decent education. What else ... caught a couple of Rollins vocal mannerisms, though it may have been an illusion.

The Spicy Baby Tomatoes have a good grasp of what's possible after HC and, I'd say, have a fair bit on the ball. The music includes a notable degree of standard vanilla HC (d. 1991, after a long senility), but has a lot more flavour to it; they're good cooks and I'd keep an eye on 'em for sure.

Panel Van don't do anything *new*, but they have a good slant on the old shit. As Danny says, "*I like a band that starts off with a bit of a boogie.*" The base is early '70s heavy metal (the first few years after the invention of HM) with a slant relevant to the '90s. There's a fair bit of HC in the '70s mix, but it remains a decent historical reading. There was indeed fine music in those dark days, and tonight.

Must mention the stage diver, who was really entertaining until Tuggy led him off — the time he flung himself off the stage directly to a CRASH on the (at all times empty) floor being particularly inspiring and drawing a good crowd response. (The crowd had woken up by this time.) Even Panel Van's cover of "In 'n' Out Of Grace" (Mudhoney) didn't get the crowd to move (mind you, they danced to the between-band DJ — fuckheads), though they did applaud.

(There's a little thing in my notes at this point that says "*Mention record-skating.*" I can't for the life of me recall its relevance to this show, but the only thing I can think of that it could refer to was a happy Sunday afternoon of record-smashing after the Carr Street garage sale. I had all these unsaleable shitawful vinyl records that failed to move even at twenty cents each, so we had fun breaking them to bits [I remember Cassie looked thoroughly delighted with the idea] and skating on 'em. Skating on surplus

Eurodisco twelve-inchers is very entertaining. We spent some time falling on our butts whilst doing so, but I'm sure you could securely attach them to your feet and rig two more on some sort of ski-pole arrangement or other. Records slide on road surfaces unbelievably easily — try it yourself if you don't believe me. None of this has much to do with the show presently under review, but it's a nice and surely useful slice of life.)

Danny on Botticelli's Angel and singer Declan: "*Metal-soul. Not soul-metal, but metal-soul. It's like James Brown and Henry Rollins fighting for control over the same body. He has a nice voice.*" Declan is a wild dancer. I can see why he went for it so much with a busted leg. The crowd consensus on the band seemed to be that they were a good metal band as such, *but* the people weren't interested in seeing metal-bands-as-such. So nyah poo from them, I guess.

(Nick the doorman tells the story of Declan breaking his leg: Declan jumped off the stage and lay there screaming for two minutes ... and everyone thought the screaming fitted in with the song really well. Nick then related the story of a Girlschool show he was at in England, where the guitarist did this utterly amazing lead break lying down ... keeping going all the way through the rest of the song. It was only then that anyone thought to investigate, and found that she was in fact being electrocuted through her guitar and required hospitalisation for third-degree burns. Why isolation isn't standard on rock'n'roll equipment is a total mystery to me — it's a simple electronic trick, isn't expensive and wouldn't affect the sound at all. Great lead break, though.)

Vacsonicum, quite apart from the silly name, were hardly world-beating, but certainly did not deserve the completely zero reaction they received. They have some conception of HC (not sure exactly what), but mainly concentrate on the 'pop' side of the 'sub-pop'. (Lower-case, not upper; common noun, not proper.) Not plain HC black and white — there's a bluish-green tinge to it. The Vacs do, I think, have some vision of what they want to do, although they've a bloody lot of work to get there.

The much-touted Molecular Art Slide Show is, ahh, very molecular and arty. It's a series of blurry blobs and patterns that someone thought decorative. Me, I'm hanging out for ... well, guess.

*Doe Eyed / Bethesda / Tsimshian / Never Comin' Back / On A Point / Harmonics / King Of Parallel Parking / Cute Gang / Ballad / Dirty Lizard*

A whole lot of the crowd left during the Vacs, but a lot were here specifically for the ol' 'Stangers. Mustang! killed it tonight, no two ways about it. Either you recognise their status as direct sonic link to the gods or you don't.

Their placement in this show (with these bands — barring Botticelli's — and, especially, with this particular crowd) is somewhat odd, in that they really don't have a lot to do with the sump-pop branch at all; theirs comes through from places like noisy NZ stuff, American post-hardcore that branched off from HC much earlier than the sump-slops, and so on and so forth. (If you really want to know, ask them. I'm not some kind of goddamn musical oracle. I just Believe in Music.) Though it's the least bad match for them in Perth Pop City this year and certainly better than most matches they would have had last year.

Mustang! are the boys for '92 and '93 and prime contenders in the PF Rock Awards. You owe it to yourself.

\* 'Sump-Pump' is ©®™ Paul Keller/*Ebb!* 1990. *Flipside* may have "... er ... borrowed it! Flattery is the sincerest form of ..." but we at PF have principles.

*(The above review was written immediately after the show ... looks really outdated, doesn't it? The term 'hardcore' is, of course, not the one now applied to dance music — ed.)*

## **VOID BENEFIT: FLESHMESH / SWOONERS / BENJI** — *Beat Room, Thursday 30/4/92*

Tonight was basically not promoted. I came down for something to do because I happened to go over that day's X-Press with a fine-toothed comb. Hence nearly no-one showed up. I chucked ten cents (all I had) in the Void collection tin, though.

Fleshmesh are a three-piece with a *huge* drumkit. Both the guitarist and the bassist sing. They play standard forms I can't quite identify immediately, and they did a good job. Someone said they were "*U2-ish*"; this didn't occur to me, which may be a credit to them. Not at all radical, but fine.

The Swooners are sort of an alternative mishmash. They could be a *lot* less indifferent than they are. I asked Sascha (*v*) afterwards if she liked the Baby Animals (let that jihad ray *rip!*): "*They don't bother me.*" ... bad sign. The female members get 'em points, minus half a point for the singer's check-flannel. I thought girls had more sense than boys. The bassist has a Sonic Youth *Goo* shirt, but even Danny has one of those.

This was Benji's first show with Stuart Medley (ex-Fur Versions) replacing Rolf Farstad (ex-Wash) on bass, and the sound of the band was still unclear, but nevertheless a *lot* better-defined than previously. Not bad at all.

Fifty-cent middies are king.

## **MARS BASTARDS / RAINYARD** — *Beat Room, Friday 8/5/92*

The Rainyard played better than I've heard them in a while — I remember their FM rock sound a few months back at the Void launch ... they're really on the ball tonight. We even danced. The instrumental prowess wasn't spoiled by the odd vocal bum note from Liam. (Cue Peter Sellers folk-song sketch.) Adrian chucked his drumsticks into the crowd, but we threw 'em back. Be ecologically sound.

Def FX (Dead Fucks) were playing at the Berlin tonight and the Mars Bastards must have been in competition with them — all the dance-beat songs ran seven minutes or more. (And "*Astound Me*" was *precisely* the right song to start the proceedings.) Ian Freeman had cut off the Rolf Harris and was working on a Sub-Pop goatee to match Jeff's. Gil retains his facial hair, which is a really bad idea. I gotta say it. Cliff was clean-shaven tonight and Shaun never has succumbed to the temptations of facial pollution ... the show before the Northbridge Festival was intensely scary due to the fur on four out of five band members. Hey, Kids: Don't Do Facial Hair, *Fool!*

Um, what else ... John Reid pointed out that the dancers who aren't the standard Mars Bastards groovers are actually a lot groovier than the aforementioned Groovers themselves.

For some reason known only to God, we went to Brannigan's Hell-Hole Dive (near corner Hay & Irwin Streets) afterwards, as part of the Mark "*Gudinski 1996*" Ghirardi contingent. The place has both pub and nightclub licences and so is open all the time.

Cans four dollars, lemon squash TWO DOLLARS FUCKING FIFTY. Sign: "*Middies \$2.*" I go up to bar. "*Middie.*" Get middie. "*Two sixty.*" "*The sign says 'Middie \$2.'*" "*What?*" "*The sign says 'Middie \$2.'*" "*Oh ... You can't have it.*" The bar-person then pours the drink down the drain. I guess it was being able to read that really foxed 'em.

The music was disco, the crowd was strictly suburban twenty to fifty and the dancefloor was filled with writhing sekketries and office clerks (in their office clothes) who wish *they* could live in Ocean Reef too. 1975 haircuts at the bar. Y'know, it's comforting to know that places like this still exist ... it gives the jihad new focus. Further impetus.

## **ROSEBUDS / TIRED STARLINGS** — *Shenton Park, Friday 10/7/92*

Missed the first band, apparently a duo — was occupied in the back room of the front bar watching the video for the single on continuous loop, mopping up the dregs of the champagne, chips and cocktail franks (the latter looking unbelievably repugnant under dim lighting) and chatting to the remains of the launch crowd. The great news was that MDS finally pulled the old finger out and got copies of the single to the House of Wax on that very day. (Ask Kim for the story — I'm sure he'll tell anyone. In detail. MDS's delivery habits don't augur well for their quest to be the seventh major, never mind Shock having [with Ed Kuepper] beaten them to the punch for first genuine chart hit. Of course, Shock's attitudes to *payments* are ... oh, never mind.)

I was trying to think of a reasonable encapsulated description of the style the Tired Starlings play in — pop songs starting from the 'power-pop' mould, but with the jangle factor cut down to near zero and the guitar crunch and drums turned *way* up; you know the stuff, there's a fair bit of it about at the moment — when Brad hit the nail right on the head! '70s pub rock. Oh well. I might mention that they did a nice pop version of "No Fun".

The Rosebuds were a pleasant surprise and not at all what anyone was expecting — not the power-pop crunch stuff (see previous paragraph) favoured by the Chevelles (or not much, anyway), but really incredibly nice jangly melody stuff with non-standard chords and all — none of the I-III-IV-V pattern ("Stepping Stone", slight return). Particular goodies "Anytime" and the travel song in the encore. The band was no polished wonder, but are definitely a *band*, as in functioning unit, which is the important thing; the polish can come later. (The Stay-In-Tune brand strings — as used by the Baby Animals! — consistently failed to, but that didn't stop 'em.) Should record soonest reasonably possible. This was a fine start indeed.

## **BRIGHT LIGHTS SMALL CITY TAPE LAUNCH: WOODEN FISCHE / VIOLET SLIDE / VACSONICUUM / BENJI / MUSTANG!** — *Shenton Park, Friday 17/7/92*

The doors opened at 8:00pm and there were ninety-two people here by 8:20 ... all projections were on Guy Blackman being a rich man tonight. And he'll have earned it, too — the dude (almost said 'guy') is eighteen and has done more (zines, shows, a compilation tape) than I would have thought *possible* at eighteen. Scary stuff.

All the people here are impossibly young. Christ! Why can't the Perth scene just *die* and leave us elders to lament on the good ol' days and lie about how great they were, rather than have all these young folk come along and have even better new days, leaving us practiced whingers obsolete? Fuck! — may have to gain some *joie de vivre* or something.

(Any sweet young thing who thinks they could do a better job of PF should apply at the usual address: you're probably right. Then I can go to the retirement home safe and happy.)

For some reason, there was a Pernod promotion going on: walk in, get a free dose and then (presumably) go to the bar, buy three Pernods in a night and get the chance to win incredibly tacky Pernod promotional rubbish. The poor Pernod woman (in a nice red, blue and white uniform, no less) was in the *wrong* pub tonight. Most of these kids have just graduated from orange juice and still get a major thrill from the act of going up to a bar and asking for a *beer*.

Wooden Fische are very young and a poppy sorta band. I'm not in a 'sounds-like' mood right now, but they have gtr/bass/drums and a vocalist who flaps his arms a lot; all would look sloppily appealing to a certain breed of first-year arts student. I liked 'em and would see them again.

The mixer should be shot. 'Twas incredible the difference between Violet Slide up close and down back. The band do indie-pop in the current fashion whose closest easy comparison is the Rainyard (if you like them, you'll like Violet Slide), but the songs are more diverse and they're into playing with good sounds. The singer will catch girlies like flies.

You should always throw balloons amongst an audience to brighten things up.

Vacsonicum had their new singer, one week out of rehearsal. Danny says "*Sonic Youth and Yoko Ono ... but the wrong Yoko Ono.*" (He just got the CD box.) They're four hundred percent on what they were (see elsewhere); he still hates 'em.

Benji were lots of fun — a bit of entertainment in there. The singer's shirt should be worn with flares and only available on prescription to registered addicts. Relaxing is very good for bands.

Oh boy, oh boy, I got my night made tonight — drank three Pernods and got a prize: a Pernod cap! *Definitely* the best toy of the night. I had so much fun with this. Danny says I look like a redneck. A retarded house-painter. The Lawnmower Man. It's amazing what petty amusement you can get out of low-grade promotional rubbish. A rock'n'roll show isn't just the sounds coming out of the PA; it's a *cumulative aesthetic experience*, and *everything* counts.

(Hey, it could have been worse ... I could have won a Pernod bumbag instead.)

Mustang! started slow, but fired up to full by the end. Remember: drink safe. Mustang! in full flame are the sort of band to inspire meaningless purple prose. Let's just note that Hamish did a great dive through the drumkit (the expression of thorough bemusement on Chris's face was worth it) and that I had "Never Comin' Back" playing in my head for a coupla days after. In fact, I got home that night and played that one song off the compilation over and over and over. What can I say.

### **D.M.3 / CHEVELLES** — *Coronado, Saturday 19/9/92*

The Chevelles were minus Duane tonight, who was extremely ill. This actually resulted in a pretty fine set, in that the three remaining put in 110% effort to make up for his absence; and a 110% effort always shows. The sound is also a bit more open with one guitar doing the work of two — said 'openness' being but a fine line away from 'full of holes', but the Chevelles' two-guitar sound is a bit overfull anyway and so they remained on the right side. Looking and being a touch vulnerable and doing a great show anyway worked well tonight.

D.M.3 are Dom Mariani's latest. The songs are as advanced as the Someloves/Orange and the playing is a bit more rocky, not so much straight pop. Yeah, they were fine too. But they had some competition in the performance stakes.

### **YUMMY FUR / ROSEMARY BEADS / MARDI PICASSO / SLEEP FURIOUSLY** — *Grosvenor, Saturday 26/9/92*

Sleep Furiously are three of Yummy Fur plus singer and keyboards. They favour the Cure, Siouxsie, the Cocteau Twins, Kate Bush, Sundays, complete this list yourself — what happens when goths, oops, indie poppers with a small talent start a band. (They wore their hearts on their T-shirts.) All can play/sing very well, though the singer doesn't move at all. A fine showing for youngsters. Persist.

Mardi Picasso was Martin, Claudine and Cathi in their first pub gig in God knows how many years ... they did fine; a fair few slips, but **THE CROWD WAS ON THEIR SIDE** and that's what's important. Claudine

really goes for it in the songs she does in French. (“Mon Chemin” was a killer.) “After Hours” (Velvets) sounds really cool in a Belgian accent.

This is the first time I’ve heard the Rosemary Beads; all songs sound like Tim listens to his Velvets LPs a bit much. However, they hit it tonight. A full dancing floor, no less. And Cathi’s viola is *wild*. The Viola from Hell, no less. Gretta’s voice is great — more, please. Tim should sing in his upper octave, however. This band has unstoppable *esprit de corps* — they all know and believe in exactly what they’re doing. Not perfect tonight, nor a lot revolutionary, but there wasn’t much wrong with this.

Yummy Fur were fine. Don’t remember a lot and I didn’t take any notes, but hey. So I’ll use this space to reveal that Martin Gambie’s musical career started at the age of fourteen, when he stole his ten-year-old sister’s ukulele. And she *still* hasn’t gotten it back.

### **DAVE GRANEY / NEIL PRESTON** — *Club Original, Sunday 29/11/92*

A quick acoustic show slipped in before the Nick Cave support. A buck’s a buck, after all. Neil Preston starts proceedings, assisted by new Month Of Sundays guitarist Grant Ferstat — not revolutionary stuff, but quite fair and reasonable. Dave Graney has Rod Hayward of the Coral Snakes along to assist. Dave looks and sounds like he’s had a huuuge smoke before going on stage (we have no reason to assume that this was actually the case ... Viv says he looks like a wooden Indian), but what he’s rambling on with before each song with (the talk being of comparable length to the song itself) doesn’t really require thought. So yeah, he’s the King.

(I love the way the story before the song virtually makes the lyrics superfluous. After their intros, a lot of these could have been instrumentals.)

(Coolest before-song tale: about the three people who die and the only things left of them are the affectations they put on to piss off the world ... nothing else. No other substance remains. Now, *that’s* a scary story.)

Dave Graney is the sort of person you wish you’d had as an uncle when you were a kid.

### **ARC / ROSEMARY BEADS** — *Pocket’s, Thursday 3/12/92*

Pocket’s Pool Lounge used to be the Ozone. The front band room (expressly designed for live music) is now nowt but a pool hall. The front bar is as always, with any band present crammed into a corner, but that’s fine.

This was the second time I’d seen the Rosemary Beads, and they really hit it. Gretta had a Guns N’ Roses singlet in the style of a Jim Beam shirt. I *really* approve of a viola held like a guitar. Cathi plays it over her head, behind her back, with her teeth ... well, not quite, but she sure goes for it and it’s worth seeing. In his lower octave, Tim Underwood sounds *just* like Steve Kilbey. (“*And looks like Eugene Kelly from the Vaselines!*” — Guy.) Perhaps it’s the absence of drums, but they’re a *lot* better tonight than when I saw ’em before.

The Rosemary Beads had some fun at the WAMI Awards this year. Chunky (’92’s V-Capri, but possibly not as dumb) played one song. Tim voiced his disapproval. Then a second song. Disapproval again. Then Chunky said the goddamn dumbest thing you could say in a nightclub full of six hundred musicians: “*Well, if anyone out there thinks they could do better ...*” So Tim called their bluff. (Clobbered across dancefloor in Chelsea boots in best OK Corral manner ...)



Tim Underwood gets this year's award for defender of the faith, keeper of the musical flame for the prestige elite (that's us). And he even got an anonymous slagoff in the X-Press letters section. Buy this man a drink. (Straggly hair, big nose, pointy boots, star quality. Go on.)

(By the way, I hereby defy X-Press and Encore Productions to sue me for the following statement: Many, and sometimes all, of the 'letters' printed in X-Press are in fact written by the editorial staff. Furthermore, this practice has been in place for many years. Go on, write a letter — it stands a better chance than you think.)

(By the way, wasn't it interesting how no-one outside the industry daisy-chain showed for 'Ausmusic' day this year? Hype will be exposed, music shall live, the prestige elite shall rise again ... etcetera.)

Arc are a very good Everything But The Girl soundalike. *"The guitarist is the bastard son of a thousand Chapterhouses. Or a thousand Pale Saints. One or the other. Take your pick"* — Bernard. *"Sundays"* — Guy. I didn't mind them at all, though I'm not really that keen on the style at all. Is it the season for this kind of thing or something?

**David.**

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# Live (1993-94 Perth-Sydney-Melbourne)

## *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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### **BEASTS OF BOURBON / YOU AM I** — *Metropolis, Wednesday 15th December 1993*

I hate Metropolis hugely, and even more tonight as I could predict that the crowd would consist of JJJ jobs — the people you saw a month later at the Big Day Out in INXS T-shirts and thongs. But, for what may prove to be the last Beasts show ever, I guessed I could cope.

**You Am I** now feature Sir Russell Hopkinson on drums. And what do you know, they caught my attention for the first time. Standard alternative fare and lots of power ballads, but I could tell the songs apart and liked quite a few of 'em. They scored a point with me here.

**The Beasts Of Bourbon** crossed the fine line between 'independent' and 'alternative' a while ago and have been running faster and faster. This was going through the motions like I've never seen. Crowds like this should not be played down/up to. The Beasts used to do this great trick of accessible strangeness ... the strangeness was entirely absent. It was a rawk band. 1988–1993; good riddance.

A special word about the bouncers, who determined it was their mission to wipe out all forms of crowd enthusiasm and particularly stage-diving. One bouncer decided to drag a girl off by the hair, hurting her quite a bit; she decided to call the police, and they proceeded to drag said bouncer away ... past the entire crowd out the front, all booing and catcalling and screaming, "*HANG HIM! HANG HIM!*" I don't think the police have been that popular in Fremantle for quite a while.

### **TEX, DON AND CHARLIE / LOUIS TILLET** — *Charles, Saturday 5th March*

Louise ranted at me not to see **Louis Tillett**. "*He sucks! He sucks!*" I went anyway. She was one hundred and ten percent wrong. Louis Tillett is worth the years of waiting to see. He plays hell out of a piano — remember that the piano is a *percussion* instrument and has as much rock'n'roll in it as a whole band if it's in the right hands — and I like his voice a whole lot. Louis did most of the playing, tho' the song I came in on had Louis alone at the mike with Don Walker doing the keys. And his songs: he even did "Swimming In The Mirror" — originally a single by No Dance (a get-together of Louis, Damien Lovelock and someone from Died Pretty) and then on *Ego-Tripping At The Gates Of Hell*, both long-unavailable; the single is a slab of swirling shades-of-grey '80s psychedelia, but *tonight's* rendition was right in your face and kicked butt. "Sailor's Dream" (Wet Taxis). All sortsa good stuff. I'm *real* happy I was here for this set.

Seeing the pleasant suburban folk trying to take in Louis was fun; it's a pity they can't get the records (is it true that everything is deleted, even the album on Festival?). I was next to a couple of bemused blonde girls in white and a serious-looking bogan lad with metal shirt, black jeans and white trainers who was straining his brain to comprehend this guy. If there'd been room, I'd have been wildly jumping around. We need more of this sort of piano-battering; guitars get dull after a while, and to rock certainly doesn't require them. This set made my weekend.

The audience for **Tex, Don and Charlie** was the blonde girls in white who discovered Sex Perkins some

time in 1993 (I want to strap them down and play *Waste Sausage* and *Leather Donut* at them) and the FM rock listeners who came to hear The Songwriter From Cold Chisel®™. (Whozis Charlie Owen dude?) Don Walker is doing okay for himself; having at least one song you wrote played every hour or two on every FM rock station in the country is a fair start on financial security. The Tex, Don and Charlie album is pretty good. The place was moderately full (I don't know how a pub with a sardine capacity of a thousand gets away with having no large carpark) and pretty damn sweaty; we got to the pit, but there was no way we'd ever get out before the end. The three names are accompanied by Tillett on second keys, plus double bass, slide and drums. They played for an hour and a bit (encores including a brilliant "Play With Fire"). The music was sincere to proper standards, but way accessible to the somewhat thick crowd present — the trick the Beasts of Bourbon *used* to manage so well. No-one jumped around, but a lot swayed from side to side. I'm amazed how much Don Walker looks like Richard Lane.

If the rehabilitation of Cold Chisel does happen (and I hope it doesn't; but look at how Neil Young snuck past for an example of what I mean), I hope we get it over with quickly. Punk rock dies a little bit every time we lose another musical demon. What's left to rail against? 'Grunge'?

### **KITTY MAGIC / DAYZSA / O!** — *Orient, Saturday 26th March*

I remember the Orient from youthful Fremantle pub crawls, and I do mean stagger. You'd go into this bar full of middle-aged TAB goers; there'd be a guy doing top-forty with guitar and programmable keyboard, and he'd be *really bad* at it. And the drinks'd be real cheap. No expectations ... it was perfect.

Now the drinks have gone up and the Orient has real bands. Saw ten minutes of **O! Dayzsa** (not "Day 25A" as the gig guide had it) are into Swervedriver and the Smashing Pumpkins<sup>[1]</sup> and this was their first show, and it all showed. But that's fine, y'know. Turn up the guitars, though. Points to the middle-aged couple who wandered in and decided to dance.

**Kitty Magic** did a fine job. Danny shouldn't wear tight clothes 'cos he's living too comfortably. I was *in* a version of this band, many years ago (and still know those bass lines) ... I love 'em. They overplay hugely and unapologetically (Danny's perpetual soloing; Steve's completely gratuitous double kick — which he has apparently gotten rid of ... thank God) but they have the songs (so they can get away with a lot) and the *rock*. And that's the bottom line. Danny is into Zappa and New York noise bands, and it shows. (He was into Sonic Youth when they were just another of those fuckin' New York noise bands he raved on about all the time. Man. Got 'ny Rat-At-Rat-R? Got 'ny Live Skull? Got 'ny Glenn Branca? Can you discuss Lydia Lunch's *guitar work* for hours on end?) Good songs overplayed hugely are fine with me. Danny can't 'sing', but he uses his voice effectively in his stuff. I've thought a second guitar would be good for those moments when Danny overplays into space, but I think they could actually live without it. They even had someone dancing for "Red Dream".

**INTERZONE** club, second night (*sixteenth April*). Well, I was there for four hours and had a good and sociable time, seeing a huge number of people I knew. The place has an excellent set-up — black wooden (not plastic! No plastic visible!) boards all over the place, creating semi-inaccessible nooks and crannies throughout; ideal for being a loser loner in, and no doubt some over-hormoned goth couple will try surreptitiously bonking somewhere ... By the way, we don't have goths or nerds any more — they're cyberpunks now. (That's a nerd with a Skinny Puppy CD or a goth with a Nintendo.) Yes.

The place sells Jolt Cola (all the sugar, twice the caffeine! Three bucks a pop, but it's damn fine) and Zone 3/Interzone are the only place selling it in WA. (Now bottled in South Australia, so it may spread. Don't you know that unhealthy pursuits are a Generation X watchword?) We advise you to bring a hip flask (it's BYO) and buy mixers there. (I lugged six stubbies half an hour before queueing a year. Jesus.) Zillions of

hyper-caffeinated kids in black. The music is sucky techno-industrial pop, but they did play a few actual songs.

There are sufficient girls' toilets, which I think is a first. (They actually marked a male toilet 'Women Only' and put porta-loos out the back for the boys in order to meet regs for three hundred people. The boys' were quite sufficient for everyone in the outside 'chill-out' zone and the girls' were apparently crowded but adequate.)

The other fun thing was being asked for ID when I'm sure that door guy was five years younger than either me or my companion. Carded for the first time in my life at twenty-seven.

The other other great thing was being told of a drink called Red Bull from Thailand, apparently available in Asian supermarkets — one thousand milligrams of caffeine in every bottle. That's thirteen cups of coffee. Must check this out.

**KISS MY JACUZZI — MUSTANG! / FEENDS / O! / BLUE TILE LOUNGE / CHRIS HANN —**  
*Shenton Park, Friday 22nd April*

Party at Club 96, then down to the rock awards show where *everyone's* a winner, baby.

**Chris Hann** of the Wooden Fische gave a short solo set to start, and it worked fine. **Blue Tile Lounge** are a band I've never gotten into a whole lot. Actually, I can't stand 'em. REM as slackers. Not my scene. I was in the front bar. (Let's just pause for a moment and thank the front bars of this world.) Lots of people I know disagree, though lots of people I know agree.

**O!** were bound to be interesting, seeing as Nick seemed to have been alcoholically transported to another world prior to this show (you shoulda seen him on the verandah of 96) and Bill was on his way there ... they kept it together fine ... ish. "Outskirts" (first on the tape) is my favourite O! song, by the way.

The **Feends** are not quite the greatest band in the world, but they know it so that's okay. Cheat-markers-on-the-keyboard rock'n'roll is the new apocalypse. Remember: it's just a thin line between ninety-nine percent pose on stage and the full one hundred. I've thought Samantha Wilson was a natural-born pop babe star since I've known her, so it's good to see it coming true.

**Mustang!** played their second show since John Campbell rejoined and they were a lot more together. Took till the third song or so (second was one of John's anal one-chord art-rock numbers that requires absolute precision timing and probably sheet music ... but you could tell it was a great song), but they cooked from then on. The new songs are killers. Three working vocalists is great too. The performance wasn't one hundred per cent, but it was certainly at least ninety and that's enough when the songs are this good.

**MARK OF CAIN / BOTTICELLI'S ANGEL —** *Orient, Sunday 29th May*

As we walked down High Street in the cold and the rain, we heard the sound of a loud band cutting through the weather. I love that, y'know. **Botticelli's Angel** weren't that good — too much metal pomp in there — but they were good for hearing off in the distance as we approached, still not knowing who the mystery support was. Due credit once more to Declan as Perth's most active front man.

The one and only **Mark Of Cain** pub show was on a cold and rainy Sunday night at the wrong end of town; the people there were those who *wanted* to be there. This always results in an excellent environment if there's enough of 'em. (Although the band's exceedingly short hair attracted a number of the skinhead

crowd — yep, they're still around — which I'm sure the players found somewhat weird.)

“*Uh, this song's about alienation and isolation,*” went the intro, which summed it all up. The music clearly marks the band as a mid-'80s relic (specifically that it's only the first step advanced from hardcore), but that's fine. Bass-line doodles during guitar string changes included “From Safety To Where?” by Joy Division and “New Dawn Fades” by Joy Division. I liked this show so much I sent off fifty dollars for the ten-cassette box set later that week.

**VROOM 5 — MUSTANG! / BENJI / STUMP MITTENS / BENNY GELARE / PSYCHODRAMA**  
— *Old Boans Warehouse, Friday 24th June*

RTR got the hire of the old Boans warehouse on the cheap courtesy of the East Perth Raze, Rebuild and Yuppify Development Authority, who proved amenable to the idea of ‘culture’ showing its face in their theme-park suburb. Good thing we had Guy and Richard in the right place at the right time, hey? The place is large, draughty and *freezing cold*, though not as cold as it was outside. Obtaining a food permit proved too much hassle, but they did call the guy with the hot dog van (who probably sold the most vegie-dogs of his career) and were pretty slack about people taking food inside. Nick the doorman (not a ‘bouncer’, but a *doorman*.) was a welcome sight. Three dollars’ entry, a door list as long as your arm and a three-hundred-person limit, but RTR managed not only to pay the bands but make a buck or two on top.

Missed **Psychodrama**, though having heard them on the radio a few days before I can't say I was real cut up about it. **Benny Gelare** is Bill from O! and his housemate, where he plays guitar and she sings. They weren't riveting, but they were pretty nice. Did a Eurythmics song in there somewhere.

The **Stump Mittens** continue to suck. They *could* actually prove to contain the sort of talents that came from the last band I thought were this completely shite, the Stool Pigeons (who gave us Hamish from Mustang!, Miles from Baked and Cameron from Worm Farm), lots of other people think they're good and I *might* be wrong ... but I fear that any band that gets a good review in *Green Left* has problems only Dr. Jack Kevorkian could help. (The drummer was great, though.) The audience were applauding due to a bad case of Wenner's Syndrome: respect for musicians.

**Benji** were okay. Something missing from the sound. New bass (Rod ex-Rust, thus meaning Benji are now Rust with a different guitarist) fitting in fine. **Mustang!** kicked a large degree of butt tonight, warming our frozen buns nicely. You could hear the songs and lyrics. And I had Hamish's “William Holden Casual” and Mike's “T-O-B-O-B-O-Y” stuck in my head for ages afterwards. If ‘grunge’ was a 1994–95 thing, Mustang! would've been signed and fucked over by Geffen wonderfully by now. I went home happy.

**MOLASSES** — *Guy's house-warming party, Sunday 17th July*

Newest and brightest young things, showing how to be pretty shambolic and not so slick on those instruments and still be great: have lots of wonderful songs. Played an hour and a half which was fifty minutes of music and forty minutes of swapping instruments, tuning up and trying to get things to work. They're rank amateurs, except of course that they have record collections at least as good as yours and have worked out quite a few things about how to string notes and chords and words together.

**BING** — *Grosvenor, Saturday 13th August*

The last show I saw before skipping town: the three members of Baked who got back together on their

second show after six months in rehearsal. The first was the afternoon before at the Campus Bands Competition (requisite student being upcoming man of the arts Myles Durham), which they didn't win, probably for not being funk-metal or at least a JJJ pop band.

The songs are all about ten years long. It sounds like Baked with the Jonny songs missing (funny, that), but maybe it's just me. Nothing *wrong* with it at all ... it wasn't the immense quality head-kick that seeing the first Baked show was, but standards have gone up since then, to no small degree due to the lads themselves. (*Examination question*: discuss the influence of Jon Campbell as Perth scene quality catalyst.) Mark, Lorne and Myles all have their own individual star quality. I went home happy ... before Favourite Game played. Hey! Bing along with Bing! Bing everybody! Bing all your friends!

Popped up to Sydney to visit Louise and the dogs and have a rest from house-hunting. I got into Sydney a lot more this time around. Access to a car and a Macintosh (cheers to Tim and Linda) were a real help. Car was a Cortina six and was just perfect for taking off from lights and avoiding death at the hands of psychotic Sydney taxi drivers. (“... *but you had to stop for diesel?*” “*Yes, I know somewhere you can get it cheap.*” “*And where is that?*” “*Paris.*”) Ran out of petrol (duh) ... forgot these big mothers are thirsty. But there's nothin' like a hunk of Geelong iron at your command when you really need it.<sup>[2]</sup>

So if the Sydney band scene has died in the arse, how did I see all these bands in one two-week timespan?

### **NEW CHRISTS / BROTHER BRICK** — *Feedback, Newtown, Saturday 3rd September*

Feedback is a nightclub that's started having bands on. It's about as effective as having bands in the Firm or Limbo/Fruition/Amnesia was — it's bloody obvious it isn't set up for them, and they still don't understand the concept of oxygen. Bouncers with white shirts and bow ties create an instant bad vibe because their main interest is looking for a drunk to beat up.

**Brother Brick**'s fourth show with new (second) guitarist, who doesn't look like a rock pig but plays like heck. The bassist plays chords most of the time, but it's not excessive. They're all excellent musicians who know why they're there. Straight-up rock action that hit the spot every time.

The **New Christs** were okay (I can't imagine a Rob Younger band ever being terminally bad) and I'd been waiting years to see them, but I couldn't breathe and was ready to collapse (arrived in Sydney two hours before show time), so see you later. If they'd been *great* I'd have stayed. But they sounded like a Red Eye rock band sounds. Sorry.

### **ASTEROID B-612 / SEMINAL RATS** — *Annandale, Thursday 8th September*

**Seminal Rats** did what they do. Not as shit-hot as the New Year show, but fine.

**Asteroid** launched their CD tonight (if I'd been quicker-witted I'd have caught the one Stuart threw into the crowd). The huge guy on the left (John) is the boss. Two guitarists (Stuart from Brother Brick on effects rack and John on plain feedback screech) playing noise and swapping lead and rhythm. Another one that Lou says was not as good as usual, which just leaves me hanging out to see more. Real long set, too.

### **FEEDTIME / PHLEGM** — *Vulcan, Ultimo, Friday 9th September*

Excellent people here — nicely dressed, lots of coloured hair, you can smell their bodily odour as they walk past and you can overhear snippets of conversation about their Prozac. And they got into the bands in a *big* way, which is the most important thing. Lou said there wouldn't be many people there, which probably has more to do with the place being the size of a shoebox than competition or popularity.

Primed ourselves on the **Phlegm** CD all through early evening. Get it. “*Hello. We're Club Hoy, we have a new album out on DGC called In Utero and this is a song from it called 'Rape Me'.*” Oh dear. (Lou says she didn't blush, but ...) All the falsetto screams are courtesy Nick (bass), who takes a few deep breaths before launching into each bout. Samples and clinky keyboard bits are triggered by the drummer. Nick has a great attitude to busted bass strings: leave 'em hanging there! Fell just this side of art-school disaster show at times, but it did fall *this* side and was pretty okay all-up. See the band, though get the CD first.

My favourite hangover record is *Shovel* by **feedtime**. It's the one you play when the headache's gone but your internal organs are still an amorphous seedy stew. Resolves 'em like nothing else and leaves you fit and roaring for an excellent late afternoon or so. (And an evening sipping water.)

The elements are simple, but it's the way they're put together that makes for class stuff. Slide on guitar and bass. Rick sings through phlegm and cigarette. Tom knows that drumsticks exist for the fat end. Mid-gut rock'n'roll blues: simple, but effective. You never saw so much silly and spastic but sincere dancing in all your life as that front row, particularly during “Shovel”. (I include myself here.)

This wasn't *the* greatest show on Earth, but the high points (about two-thirds) sure were. I'd been waiting years for this and have no complaints. I was hugely disappointed when I heard they'd split, but Rick says the band is fully back together and rolling (new album some time), so don't miss it this time. Had their version of “Fun Fun Fun” (Beach Boys ... sort of) stuck in my head all the way home and into my dreams.

#### **ASTEROID B-612 / SEMINAL RATS / BEARD / PANADOL** — *Brookvale, Saturday 10th September*

I actually found my way there and back (didn't get *too* lost — and King Street is actually navigable by 1:30am) ... Missed the first band. **Panadols** do '80s pub hard rock; hope they have trademark problems real soon. **Beard** were pretty average, but picked up by the end. Nice version of “Personality Crisis”. The **Seminal Rats** were better than Thursday. They hit it tonight, but I think I've seen them enough times now. **Asteroid** hit it and I want more. I *see* now. People finally came up the front for them. Johnny knocked over everything at the end. Piked out before **New Christs** again, but that's what you get for running an eight-hour show.

#### **KIM SALMON'S S.T.M.** — *Annandale, Thursday 15th September*

First set was Kim solo. Kim can do the solo thing well enough to pace three sets, so it's a pretty safe option for a great night out. Lots of stuff I didn't recognise, which is the other great thing about Kim. **S.T.M.** are a couple of the Dirty Three and someone else with Kim, and it's a whole 'nother angle on the Salmon thing. It's looser (as in less-defined) and rocks with a less deterministic feel to it. (There's that feel to the Surrealists that what's gonna happen is *gonna happen* to you ... Hmm, I used to compare the Scientists to the Surrealists this way.) Best song was the second song of the encore, where Warren took the guitar and Kim just sang and performed. Don't miss them, whatever you do.

#### **BROTHER BRICK / LAWNMELL** — *Sandringham, Newtown, Friday 16th September*

**Lawnsnell** are one guitar, two basses (swapping lead and rhythm) and drums with four voices, one

female. They play melodic punk rock and fuck, they're good. And fun. Great performance value — I really wish I'd had film in the camera. The girl jumped up onto the bar for their version of "Birthday" by the Sugarcubes (I was trying to figure out what it was at the time and thought it was "Regina"). If I see them again and they're this good, expect a PF article to follow.

The Sando is a gorgeous little dive (of the fall-in-love-with kind), though tonight's mixer, Paul (a dude), complained of the zero effort they put into maintaining the place. It's on the King Street shopping strip, most shows are free and the people and place are lovely — stop in.

**Brother Brick** were pin-sharp rock action once more. There isn't much else to say, except that it was fantastic and you need to see it.

Followed Bro' Brick to a party ... in a warehouse loft in Surry Hills. I mean, that sounds like something off telly: a party in a warehouse loft in Surry Hills. Looked like something off telly too — lots of the Sydney Quasi-Art-Babe stereotype (long straight bleached-blond hair — whether it was originally blonde or not — high-quality clothes, 'tude as a weapon) in attendance. I kept looking around for the cameras. Brother Brick played a considerably longer, looser and sloppier set but still rocked. Too much Brother Brick is never enough.

#### **CANNANES / SWEETLIPS** — *Sandringham, Newtown, Saturday 17th September*

**Sweetlips** apparently have John Fenton from Crow and a pile of people from other bands. It's pop, it's rockin' and it's got tunes. I don't have a handy two-sentence descriptor ("wank in a box" — Louise), but I liked 'em.

The **Cannanes** are another on the waiting-years-to-see list. The current lineup is Francesca Bussey on bass and vocals, Frances Gibson on vocals and bass, Stephen O'Neil on guitar and vocals and Ivor Moulds (from the Sydney version of Hot Water Music) on drums. (David Nichols is taking a year off to study.) Stephen was quite ill tonight, but rock'n'roll sustained him. The Cannanes used to be really sloppy on record, but were pin-sharp tonight. I was so goddamned happy. Still up and playing up and down the eastern seaboard — don't miss 'em.

#### **CUP DAY KAOS** — *Punter's Club and Evelyn, Tuesday 1st November*

If I spend eight bucks I can ill afford, I'm not after the chance to assess a series of bands on their technical competence in songwriting and playing. Fuck that. I'm after some *magic*. There's no other reason to leave the house; boredom at home will become boredom at the pub.

**Womnal** were the day's winners. Two basses, two drummers, guitar and fuzz-cello, with male and female vocals; visually interesting, lots of performance value and real evil-looking. Excellent music and excellent playing. The record is middling, but the live band are even great in the Evelyn. Don't miss 'em.

**Christbait** are a non-stupid metal band and would be great somewhere larger than the Evelyn.

I missed **Pray TV**, **Blue Devil**, **Flot Flot** and **Chris Wilson**.

Objectively versus subjectively: **The Family** (middling hardcore you don't need), **Mace** (as proficient and tedious as they were in January, but the guitarist now moves on stage), **Hoss**, **Snout** and the **Dead Salesmen**.

**Nude Rain** are four female vocalists and a touch of percussion, and hearing them felt like the soothing,



healing flow of *quality* always does after a huge load of dreadful shite. Good songs, lovely sound. And music doesn't come more DIY than four vocals and a bit of percussion. I enjoyed this a lot.

**Satellite** is Mia Stone of Stone Circus on her quest for rawk stardom. The music is overpolished mid-'80s corporate hard rock with slickness and no songs. This band and its music must stay out of any venue decent people might go to and fuck off back to the suburbs and die. I won't describe the performance, except to say that a shoot for *Black & White* ("No, no, they're *art* shots.") will follow hot on the heels of the major signing.

**This Digital Ocean** finished the day (clearing Satellite's audience, which gets them a lot of points from me). For people who think industrial music starts with Depeche Mode. Good tunes, but. Not better than missing Denton, however.

Competence is a poor substitute for magic. Competence is the curse on Melbourne music.

**David.**

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<sup>[1]</sup>May I say that the Smashing Pumpkins' *Siamese Dream* is one of the most completely bad pieces of shit I've heard in the last year. Two minutes of sub-sub-metal smoke reflected to a goddamn *hour's* length in the mirrors. Hook on the 'hit' is the cheesy bell sound-effect. That and James Iha's bleached hair are the only things the Smashing Pumpkins ever had going for them, and Iha's let the hair grow out now. This record is an entirely unsuitable influence upon the young. Fuck 'em. Fuck 'em.

<sup>[2]</sup>OK, OK, Broadmeadows. But "Geelong iron" is such a cool phrase.

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*“The songs are fatter than they are longer ...”*

## Mardi Picasso

### *Party Fears #19, 1994*

*Martin Gambie and Claudine Lhost interviewed by David concerning the Smerk (1992) and Waffle (1993) CDs, with additional questions from Sarah Nicholson.*

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**When did the Stolen Picassos finally grind to a halt? You spent a year or more doing so ...**

**Martin:** “May of 1989 or so. We went from five to four to three and played one gig as a three-piece, then Graham left as well. (*See PF#13, Rickenbacker’s Revenge family tree.*) Then me and Sandra (*Morgan*) did the Picasso Twins because we had a bunch of new songs we hadn’t recorded, so we played some gigs, gathered a small amount of money and went into Cavan’s lounge room with a microphone and recorded the *Some Mardi Sandwich* cassette. Went to Sydney for fame and fortune, and I went and Sandra stayed. She’s on one track on *Smerk*.”

**Whatever happened to the long-lost Stolen Picassos single?** (*“Girl, You’re A Good-Looking Boy/Her Beside My Phone-Book”, the two tracks that appeared on the Out Of The Woodwork compilation tape (1988) and were basically the only reason to own it*)

**Martin:** “I think it got lost! I think Bus Stop Records ran out of money or something like that. I wrote and said, ‘*if you can’t put it out, send me back the tape and I’ll try to put it out;*’ so he did and, of course, nothing more happened. It’s still sitting on my mantelpiece, actually.”

**So what did you do after the Picasso Twins?**

**Martin:** “I was living in the country for a year — getting my head together, maan — then had a couple of holidays in Sydney, then came back and slowly started recording *Smerk*. We finished the first version early in 1991 but put a couple more tracks on it, so the final version was finished that September.”

**What’s your record deal?** (*Green Balloon, yet another subsidiary label of Shock*)

**Martin:** “I have a verbal agreement which isn’t worth the paper it isn’t printed on — he said, ‘*do you want it released?*’ and I said, ‘*yeah, yeah, I want you to release it.*’ That’s about what happened. Didn’t sign anything. Didn’t sign anything with Kim Williams either (*the Stolen Picassos 12”EP on Easter*). So they’re probably going to become very rich men and I’m going to languish in poverty somewhere. Someone will have to buy me chocolate fudge and things, I won’t be able to afford my own.”

**How did you get onto the Shock guy?**

**Martin:** “We sent him a tape.”

**You mean it was an unsolicited demo that got a response?**

**Martin:** “It was an unsolicited finished recording that got a response. We recorded *Smerk* and spent all the money and sent tapes all around, and two people replied and one of them released it. He’s a music lover. He’s got faith in us.”

**He hasn’t paid you, though.**

**Martin:** “I don’t think he’s made a profit! You’d have to be a music lover to put out our stuff. I think it’s good, but it wouldn’t appeal to the zillions of people; it’s for the refined taste.”

**Claudine:** “We’ve been played on Belgian radio. I’ve got a friend there.”

**Why Mardi Picasso?**

**Martin:** “I thought Picasso was a pretty good surname, I’ve used it before, and I wanted to have something different on the beginning; ‘mardi’ is French for ‘Tuesday’, which is basically very irrelevant.”

**Why and where *Smerk*?**

**Martin:** “As you can see (*cover*), there’s a smiley face on it. We decided we needed a really short one word title; we were talking about *Smile* by the Beach Boys, Cavan came up with *Smirk* and I decided that ‘smirk’ had an E in it. We wanted something cheerful and positive and short; something you could remember, not like *My People Were Fair And Wore Stars In Their Hair* or whatever it was.”

**Graham Hope was really dubious about that credit saying “*Deep Throat*.”**

**Martin:** “Dubious? Graham’s supposed to have a sense of humour. He’s got a very deep voice, and it’s even deeper on that recording because we slowed it down. I thought he would have quite liked that.”

**I guess he was just born under a wand’rin’ star. I think I can actually identify most of these names ... who’s Suzie Meny?**

**Martin:** “Suzie Meny is the well-known typing error. Her name’s Suzie Merry — M-E-R-R-Y — and she’s actually a pre-school teacher in South Fremantle. We thought she’d go on there really well, so we got her to do a bit of singing. I suppose the graphic designer couldn’t read my handwriting.”

**Chris Batterham?**

**Martin:** “Cathi’s ex-boyfriend. ‘*We need a trumpet on this song, do you know a trumpet player?*’ ‘*Well, it just so happens ...*’

**What is the thing on the cover?**

**Martin:** “I think it’s a cross between a pig and a bear. Don’t you think that’s an individual sort of item on the cover? I’ve never seen one of those roaming the streets before.”

**I’ve never seen one of those in my *life* before. There’s something about that particular shade of purple.**

**Martin:** “It’s a children’s toy that Claudine’s son was whizzing around the house on, and I thought, ‘*that’d be good for the album cover,*’ so we stuck it in the fireplace and took a photo of it. He calls it a pig; we don’t know what it is, but it looks interesting. Furry stuff on it as well.”

**Where’s the square happy-face inside from?**

**Martin:** “The porch in Beaufort Road in Albany. That’s an Albanian face.”

**Claudine:** “That was from the front of my house.”

**Martin:** “Claudine’s son drew that. Very smirky, don’t you think?”

**Not smirky, just happy. Very square, though.**

**Martin:** “Oh well, we can’t all be cool, can we? Oh, what a quote.”

**Were all the songs quite recent?**

**Martin:** “They were all written post-Stolen Picassos. About four of them I did with the Picasso Twins, just on acoustic guitar.”

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**“Spoke”:**

**Martin:** “I actually wrote the rhythm track about ten years ago, so I had this old rhythm track and this new imitation Charles Bukowski story which Graham read over the top of it, then Claudine had a bit in French ...”

**Claudine:** “A really old song.”

**Martin:** “... and a piano piece taken off one of my songs on the Picasso Twins tape. Work out which song it is, it’s exactly the same notes.”

**What’s the little story you read out in the live version of “Spoke”?**

**Claudine:** “Martin writes kids’ stories as well. I used to read them at schools. That’s one of them that he wrote for my kids — *Jellybelly The Cake Man.*”

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**“Perm”:**

**Martin:** “I wrote that in this fallen-down old house we were living in in Albany. That’s a Claudine song I wrote when she had a perm; it looked really funny, so I put that into the lyrics.” (*says all this with Claudine within hitting range*)

**Claudine:** (*laughs*) “I walked in and he just burst into laughter ... I went out and did the shopping and came back and he said, ‘*here, I wrote a song.*’”

**Martin:** “It’s not a work of fiction, it’s fact.”

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**“Through The Holes”:**

**Martin:** “I wrote that when I was living in a unit in Maylands with Graham, just before the Picasso Twins went to Sydney. I was walking down the main road to get myself a vege-burger and it was raining and I remember getting some words.”

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**“Jacques Brel”:**

**Martin:** “Jacques Brel was a famous *Belgian* songwriter who is Claudine’s favourite songwriter. I know a couple of his songs in English and she’s played me a lot in French which I couldn’t understand. So it goes, ‘*I couldn’t make out a word/ He’s your favourite singer*’ and I can’t remember how the next bit goes.”

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**“What’s That On?”:**

**Martin:** “That’s a critique of people who can’t write songs, being really cool artists and taking it seriously instead of doing it for a joke. You can be a cool artist, but you don’t go around acting like one — you just do cool art. People that act it usually aren’t very good.”

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## “Fish-Eye Lense”:

**Martin:** “Maybe I didn’t know how to spell properly. That one really *is* about nothing.”

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## “Accordion”:

**Martin:** “That’s another true story. That’s the first song I wrote for Claudine. She used to be my next-door neighbour in Albany, which is how I met her. All the lines are true — ‘*You bought an accordion/ You said you were going to take lessons.*’ And she did plant vegetables in the garden. And I was making a pizza once and complaining ’cos my hands were dirty, and she said, ‘*Artists get their hands dirty!*’”

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**Smerk came out and sold at least a few copies, then you went straight back into the studio to record Waffle.**

**Martin:** “And, even though it’s very short, *Waffle* took a very long time to record for various reasons. Mainly incompetence on our part. We just couldn’t get our shit together. But we got seven songs out of it.”

**Claudine:** “It was money as well.”

**Martin:** “It’s *always* money. Me and Claudine manage to spend lots of money on these things.”

**Claudine:** “We had more than seven songs originally, but some of them didn’t fit.”

**Martin:** “Some of those ones didn’t seem to fit in retrospect, but we made ’em! It’s like there’s seven bands on there with the same vocalist.”

## Tell us about the cover.

**Martin:** “I had the title even before *Smerk* came out. I think the song ‘Jaffle’ had waffles in the lyrics, and it waffled on a bit. A jaffle iron’s one of those things you squash sandwiches in. Whatever’s in the lyric is a real conversation.”

**Claudine:** “There’s a waffle recipe in ‘F In Raga’. It’s on one of the posters for gigs as well. It comes from my grandmother’s recipe book.”

**Other people have love songs or sex songs, but *you* have waffle recipes.**

**Claudine:** “There’s waffles on ‘Sunny Side Up’ as well.”

**Martin:** “I was sitting up at Stammer’s Tearooms, having a cup of tea, and I saw this sign right next to my head saying, ‘*Belgian Waffles.*’ It said *Belgian* waffles, I didn’t make it say that!”

## Why the bee and the honeycomb?

**Claudine:** “We were thinking of writing ‘waffle’ the Flemish way, ’cos waffles are Belgian, and it’s spelt W-A-F-E-L, which literally means ‘the rays of the beehive,’ because a waffle iron looks like a beehive. That’s why the picture on the back. That’s a photocopy and we put the wash on it. That’s actually an electronic bee.”

**Martin:** “Those are real bees around it, but that’s an electronic one. I don’t know why, I didn’t read the article. Don’t tell *National Geographic* we stole their picture. You look at the lettering on *Smerk* and it’s the same as the colours here.”

## **The record originally had a different track order, didn't it?**

**Martin:** “We originally tacked ‘As Far As I Can Tell’ on the end and it seemed rather incongruous there, so we shuffled it all around. The original version went ‘Turkish Delight’, ‘Jaffle’, ‘F In Raga’, ‘Weeds’, ‘Colour Of My Bird’, ‘Sunny Side Up’ and ‘As Far As I Can Tell’, if your readers want to reconstruct it. Ian Freeman actually likes the old order better.”

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### **“Turkish Delight”:**

**Martin:** “A philosophical lyric, the music was ripped off some Turkish folk music album I’ve got, it originally had three different sections and it ended up with only one. Then it got a spy theme guitar bit on the end.”

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### **“As Far As I Can Tell”:**

**Martin:** “Another philosophical lyric in that it states ‘*life’s no bowl of cherries, that’s the trouble with it.*’ I keep forgetting that this song has good lyrics. I like the way we do this one live. That’s the bouncy pop song.”

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### **“Weeds”:**

**Martin:** “That started as a sort of Tom Waits-y instrumental. I said to Cavan, ‘*I have absolutely no idea for words,*’ and he was weeding his garden at the time and came back with the title and some words and, as is my wont, I picked out the words I liked and wrote some other ones. The Louis Armstrong ending came much later.”

### **I love the way that ending sounds nothing like the song but still fits it.**

**Martin:** “The ending was conceived about ten months after the original song was recorded! I was inspired a year afterwards to put another part on it. The trombone player was *very* good. I hummed the part to him and he just played it back straight away, and I haven’t seen him since.”

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### **“Jaffle”:**

**Martin:** “Claudine and I were jamming on the accordion — one on each end — and she started playing this chord pattern and I started playing a melody on top. I had the English lyrics at the end and Claudine did some French lyrics which I think are supposed to be relevant. That’s a funny song, that one, in more ways than one.”

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### **“F In Raga”:**

**Martin:** “I had all these aural visions for this song, and we’ve had about three different versions of this song, and the original backing track was six minutes long, folks! My original idea was to have a Steve Marriott/Small Faces rap over this Indian music and then have an Bo Diddley freakout over it, but I couldn’t do a good Cockney rap. I come from London originally, six miles from where Steve Marriott was from.

“It’s only got one chord in it. The simplest song I’ve ever recorded, and the hardest to record. It’s a drug song. On the first version, all the bits of backing music are chopping in and out of the vocal and it’s *really* disturbed. It’s too hard to do live — can you get loads of drug addicts to come up and play with us? Let’s spike the waffles, man — the Electric Kool-Aid Waffle Test!

“That song took longer to record than the first five Stolen Picassos tracks. It took about sixteen hours. We did about three versions. I wouldn’t leave when everyone else wanted to go home because I was possessed by art and wanted to finish the mix, then we went and recorded it a second time and I stayed back again to mix it, then we did it a third time and Claudine told me to come home or she’d leave me behind at the studio. And I got home and listened to the final version and was *very* depressed because it hadn’t come out as I’d intended.”

**Claudine:** “I had fun doing it. One day I came home and there was a tamboura sitting in my loungeroom and I asked, ‘*What’s that?*’ and I was really freaked out. It belonged to a friend who left it there to look good ’cos there were so many instruments there.”

**Martin:** “And I picked it up and put it into some sort of tuning and made up a tune on it. That song was written on the tamboura.”

**Claudine:** “That was the same night a crow came to the house in the middle of the night.”

**Martin:** “It wasn’t a crow, it was a magpie. A magpie was flying around the loungeroom.”

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### “The Colour Of My Bird”:

**Martin:** “Ah, this is a great mediaeval folk-song throwback. Claudine wrote the melody because she was wandering around the house humming a modal tune. Modal is a scale with some bits missing.”

**Claudine:** “It’s because I hear voices.”

**Martin:** “I hear jazz bands, she hears voices. I said, ‘*What is that tune you’re humming?*’, thinking it was some ancient Belgian folk tune, and she said, ‘*I don’t know,*’ and I said, ‘*Inspiration – QUICK!*’ and made her hum it into a tape recorder. Then I played the guitar in a modal tuning, four or five Bs, and stuck a harmony on it. We eventually got a set of lyrics that were relevant to something or other and Cathi stuck a third harmony on it.”

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### “Sunny Side Up”:

**Martin:** “My favourite song on the CD. A personal song, a very positive and optimistic song. I was, as I said, looking at Belgian waffles and I think we’d had another argument or something, and I wrote a very positive little song. My *début* on mandolin was the day before we recorded it.”

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### How do you do your dandy little pop songs?

**Martin:** “Most of them I came up with by strumming away on an acoustic guitar. On some of them, you pretend you’re playing another song and change it around slightly. I won’t tell you which songs, it’s too much of a giveaway. It’s like, where does Liam Coffey steal half his melodies from? He’s a good thief. I think he’s a better thief than Dom Mariani. Liam rewrites songs as good as I do, y’know? Probably better.

“I’m the principal songwriter, but I’ve written a few with Claudine; she came up with the tune for ‘The Colour Of My Bird’ and the original chord sequence for ‘Jaffle’ and wrote some lyrics. Cavan added some bits as well.”

**Claudine:** “I feel funny putting my name on songs because, as I said to Martin, I don’t feel I’ve written anything; how we work is that Martin comes out with something and he throws it at me and I respond, but it’s still his idea ...”

**Martin:** “It’s pretty hard to delegate songwriting credits. Once it’s a finished piece and it’s irrelevant what

goes on it afterwards, then it's written by whoever was there when it was created."

**It's more a financial matter than an artistic one.**

**Martin:** "Oh, I get my APRA cheque, that runs to hundreds! I never get the money anyway, it goes back in. I don't think I'll make lots of money. I'll be the Van Gogh of Perth."

**Claudine:** "With the band rehearsing regularly, we start jamming, so we come up with something written by everyone."

**Have you ever considered including lyric sheets with your records?**

**Martin:** "No, I want people to listen hard. It's too easy to give the lyrics and say '*Ain't I a great poet*' when most of them aren't great poets but pretentious twits. Oh, what a harsh thing to say. I quite like the idea of people *listening*. I don't think my lyrics are unintelligible; I think you can make them out pretty easily."

**Have you figured out how to write a song longer than two minutes?**

**Martin:** "The secret is to put only one chord in it, then you can stretch it out into a groove thang like Prince does. If you're going to make a long song, make it simple, then it doesn't get boring. That sounds like a contradiction, but it isn't. When I'm writing all these wanky songs with a hundred chords in them, it gets very compact. Is that a good explanation? The songs are fatter than they are longer. I firmly believe in quality versus quantity. I'd rather leave people wanting more than going, '*I wish this'd hurry up and finish.*' We've got a long three-chord song coming up."

"We're just following our own musical notions and I'm only vaguely aware of what's in fashion and what's not in fashion. When I actually stop to listen to it, a lot of it doesn't impress me."

**Most of your new music listening would be bands you play with.**

**Martin:** "Yeah, that's true! And every now and then someone'll play me a record and I might like it. So I maintain a high-quality input and it doesn't depress me."

**One of the things I like about Mardi Picasso is that you do go from A to Z musically.** (*"Except when I'm drunk and weepy-eyed, or at someone else's house, all I listen to anymore is jazz. Rock, when it's totally, gloriously on, can go from A to Z — no sweat — instantaneously ... Most of whatever I hear has trouble doing a credible A. Jazz can at least always be counted on for a good solid A, and usually B, C, D as well."* — Richard Meltzer, *The Aesthetics Of Rock*)

**Martin:** "Simon from the *Harvey* said that we've given ourselves such a broad vista that we can do *anything* — if we get an audience, we're not going to lose them for doing something different."

**In the music industry, you're rewarded for doing the same trick over and over and over.**

**Martin:** "And it's usually not a very good trick in the first place. Anyone who likes us will stick with us."

**Claudine:** "The next album will be richer because Falil, his background in music, he's from Singapore, and he plays heaps of stuff from Malaysia; and Vivienne and Cathi are trained classically. I really like playing with Cathi, because sometimes I couldn't hear things and she would draw me something to see it and then I could visualise and understand it; she can feel what I can't see. '*Just play them ... longer.*' And I could feel what she meant."

**Martin:** "There's an excellent chemistry in this band because everyone actually gets on well with everyone, which is most surprising. It's the first time I've ever been *completely* happy with a band I've been in."



“I’ve lost my phobia about playing live. We played three times in 1992 as a three-piece and I was completely freaked out and nervous and was trying to get out of doing any live performances again *ever*. And we’ve played this year (*last year — ed*) and I’ve been completely relaxed and I like playing live now. It’s because I cut my beard off. I was hiding behind my long beard and long hair. But I’m back now.”

**Claudine:** “Cathi and me decided we wanted to go live, because we were bored with studio, so we said, ‘*if you don’t want to play live, we won’t do anything for you any more.*’”

**Martin:** “And I didn’t want to miss out on having anything done for me, so I decided to play live.”

**Claudine:** “So we asked Vivienne and Graham if they were interested ...”

**Martin:** “And I’ve got my old bass-player back again, and he loves it as well ...”

### **Tell us the story of the found acoustic!**

**Claudine:** “We were picking up Cathi for rehearsal and it was dark, and I said to Martin, ‘*There’s a guitar in the middle of the highway!*’ so we stopped the car and picked it up. It was just lying there.”

**Martin:** “It’s a wonderful guitar. It had a pickup in it as well that’s worth about two hundred dollars. We thought, ‘*oh, we need an acoustic guitar for on stage,*’ and God threw one into the middle of Canning Highway and God made all the other cars not drive over it.”

**Claudine:** “I advertised for its owner. I was going to go to the police station with it, but I didn’t trust them. I had this idea that someone had a bad gig and walked from the Trade Winds to throw their guitar into the river.”

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2012 note: Looks like I didn't [tell you](#) about the publican at the Railway Hotel after all. I have no idea what that was about.

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# Mustang! 1992

## *Party Fears #19*

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**Hamish Fitzsimmons** — *bass, vocals*

**Toby Richardson** — *guitar, vocals*

**Mike Staude** — *guitar*

**Chris Gorman** — *drums.*

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*The previous lineup of Mustang! (with John Henderson on guitar instead of Mike) was interviewed by David in April, with the assistance of native guide Mark Cooper. A carton of a well-known intelligence-increasing drug was consumed in forty-five minutes.*

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**Hamish:** “Chris and I started the band out of the remains of Raw Sewerage with John Campbell, our first guitarist. We started as a three-piece. Raw Sewerage broke up after a spectacular night supporting the Hard-Ons at the Ozone.”

**That was reviewed in X-Press, wasn't it?**

**Hamish:** “Yeah. It was also reviewed by the management of the Ozone. That same night, we decided to form Mustang! and go for a completely different direction — tunes, playing songs under twelve minutes ...”

**Toby:** “Then John and I joined the band and made it what it is today.”

**Ah, this was the corporate merger between Mustang! and Pool Flotation Device.**

**John:** “In Mangoes, I remember.”

**Toby:** “An inspired, inspired few hours brought us together.”

**Hamish:** “Chris and I met John and Toby and decided they were much funnier than any other people we'd met who were playing music and we wanted to be in a band with them.”

**Tell us about Pool Flotation Device. I saw you once at the FreakZine launch, the disaster show ...**

**John:** *(pause)* “Yep, that's accurate.”

**Chris:** “John doesn't talk about PFD any more.”

**Who else was in the band?**

**Toby:** “Tim the drummer.” *(Now in O.)*

**Hamish:** “And Toby's brother Mark.”

**John:** “He was only there for a period, though; he only played with us twice.”

**Chris:** “You only played twice!”

**Toby:** “I'd like to say that we thought Mark'd hold us up but his amp blew up. That was it.” *(laughs)*

**Hamish:** “So, what do we think about other Perth bands? Well, it's funny you should ask that, Dave ...”

**Chris:** “What do we think about most Australian bands?”

**That they're not as good as Mustang!, perchance?**

**Hamish:** “Oh, no. We find that we don't have much in common with other Perth bands at all — neither musically nor personality-wise. They seem hung up on being cool rather than having a good time; acting like fuckin' English ... staring down at the sandshoes, wearing stripy English rock star shirts ... not being fat ...”

**Chris:** “What's the story on that, John? Why aren't you fat?”

**John:** “God knows. I drink enough beer.”

**Toby:** “Oh, John does the right things to be fat.”

**Chris:** “It's just his metabolism, isn't it?”

**Hamish:** “It's one of Nature's cruel blows that John can't get a beergut.”

**John:** “Oh, these guys are working hard on my fitness programme. They buy my beer, they pay for my pizza.”

**Hamish:** “We try, we try.”

**What was the first Mustang! show like?**

**Hamish:** “Which one was it? The old lineup played with some shit bands ... The first one was five houses down the road where my girlfriend used to live, and it was a classic show. That was when we realised, *'this is it!'*”

**Chris:** “That the chemistry was there. That we were rock gods and the world lay at our feet.”

**What's some of your early history in rock'n'roll?**

**Hamish:** “Chris and I met in year eight, when we were twelve years old, and we formed our first band soon after. I can't remember what it was, they were all terrible. This is the first good band we've been in.”

**What were you into when you were twelve?**

**Hamish:** “Shit. Brother McGee, well, he was into us.”

**Toby:** “You were good little choirboys, hey?”

**Hamish:** “Being at a good Catholic school.”

**Chris:** “I was into the Thompson Twins, Bruce Springsteen and the Cars.”

**Hamish:** “I remember Chris used to do this thing, remember that solo you used to do with Bruce? You used to sing a good song of Bruce Springsteen.”

**Chris:** “I'm Going Down! We used to sing all of the harmony bits. They were special. My mum liked that. Hamish was in the Stool Pigeons for a long time.”

**That band? They were so fuckin' bad!** (*Note: this is an example of a journalistic faux pas, and should not be duplicated — ed.*)

**Hamish:** “Thanks, Dave. Come on ... we were satirising ...”

**Chris:** “They were good for the time.”

**The Stool Pigeons attained some degree of fame in Perth ...**

**Hamish:** “No, I'm not going to say anything about it!”

**Chris:** “Except that you weren't in them.”

*“That wasn't me, that was my twin brother.”*

**Hamish:** “It's funny you should mention that, Dave. It's a sore point we don't like to bring up very much.”

**Chris:** “So you've met Gary, his brother, then?”

**John:** “Big Gary.”

**Chris:** “Not as big as Hamish.”

**Hamish:** “God rest his soul. Poor Gary. Never did have any taste in music.”

**So why is Mustang! good and all the other bands you've ever been in bad?**

**Hamish:** “Because this is about our time.”

**Chris:** “In the other bands we were learning our craft; now we've got time for the art.”

**Hamish:** “I dunno ... I think people in Perth are just trying to copy other bands ...”

**Chris:** “I don't hate metal bands, but not these funk-metal bands. Not these *nice* metal bands.”

**Hamish:** “Bands that try to do every form of music within the space of five minutes — get a reggae bit, a funk bit, a metal bit, world-music, a country-and-western bit ...”

**John:** “In case you haven't noticed, our craft is rock'n'roll.”

**Chris:** “Loud, live rock'n'roll. On-the-stage rock'n'roll.”

**John:** “Loud, no-nonsense, pants-down rock'n'roll.”

**Chris:** “There's no room for pants in this band.”

**Hamish:** “There's none of this slim-hipped, no-arsed, stripy-shirted English pop sort of thing. We try to get fat, get rid of fringes ...”

**You're not ashamed of fat arses?**

**Hamish:** “We got fat arses? Whaddaya mean, fat arses? Who you calling fat-arsed, buddy? Um, we're not ashamed, no.”

**Chris:** “Music by nerds, for nerds. We're cool nerds. We're the sexiest nerds in Perth.”

**Toby:** “I think that's the essence of Mustang! We're all geeks with style. We're just individual personalities.”

**Chris:** “Each member of this band has his own personal following and fan-club.”

## **So when's the TV show happening?**

**Chris:** “We'll see how the cartoon show goes first, Dave.”

**Hamish:** “We've been making the cartoon show ourselves and it's coming along quite well. We've got about two seconds so far. It's basically Toby moving his arm like this. It's gonna be a hottie! We haven't thought up the rest of the story yet.”

**Toby:** “It's a good hour's poetry.”

**Hamish:** “It's one of the greatest moments in cartoon history. Took us about three weeks to do.”

**Toby:** “I think it's heading back to early Disney. I'm talking nineteen-twenties here.”

**Chris:** “Well, that was its peak, wasn't it?”

**Hamish:** “When they'd have two seconds of someone moving their arm like this and the credits would come up. Boy, that was good for us.”

**Chris:** “Maybe we can do a drawing for the article.”

## **I have a feeling this article should consist entirely of photographs.**

**Chris:** “I think photographs sum up Mustang! really well.”

**Toby:** “Yeah! That's one interest we've all got.”

**Chris:** “We've got large photo collections. John keeps the archives.”

**John:** “A lot of Polaroids.”

**Hamish:** “Polaroids are very special to this band's heart.”

**John:** “We were young, we needed the work.”

**Hamish:** “I was told they were art shots.”

**Chris:** “*Art* shots?”

**Toby:** “I think the ideas behind them *make* them art shots, Hamish.”

**John:** “I just don't get how that donkey had to be hurt.”

## **You could have met Constable Care in person.**

**Hamish:** “I've always wanted to get one of his T-shirts. Just that chiselled jaw ...”

**“Don't drivel and tell dirty jokes! When you're out driving with your folks.” That was today's.**

**Hamish:** “I don't know why people crack jokes about New Zealand or Tasmania being backward ...”

**Chris:** “Did you hear about the Berlin Wall? It went down.”

**Hamish:** “Did you know that I was there when it happened? I was pissed out of my brain somewhere in West Berlin and someone said the Berlin Wall was being opened up. Just after I was having been going through seeing Einstürzende Neubauten and realising that they were the most fuckin' poor thing ever ...”

**Chris:** “How's the interview going, Dave? We should have drunk the carton first, then done the interview. I need a glass, I can drink faster out of a glass.”

**Tell me about the Mustang! shirts: “Beer Makes You SMART.” I was so happy when I got that shirt. It's made my life what it is.**

**Chris:** “That's one of my slogans. That's the motto of my life, basically.”

**Toby:** “Beer makes you funny and funny means smart.”

**Hamish:** *(laughs)* “God bless you, Tobe!”

**Chris:** “See, Hamish, no wonder we let this guy join Mustang! Second six-pack. You understand people better.”

**Talk about your tape.**

**Hamish:** “We released a tape last year and it was really poor.”

**I've been told it's really badly recorded, but the songs are OK. What about the other tape, by the Premium?**

**Chris:** “That was John Campbell and Mark Richardson, Toby's brother. We just did that for fun. Drink and eat a lot, then play. I was in Willa Benola with Mark. John did all the vocals and overdubs and we just put it out and no-one bought it.”

**How's your future?**

**Hamish:** “The biggest thing is getting out of Perth. There's something about Perth, y'know.”

**Chris:** “I like Perth.”

**Hamish:** “Yeah, but it's a terrible place if you're in a band.”

**It's a good place for bands to start, 'cos it's so isolated that little bastard bands can start up that are unlike anything anywhere; trouble is, they can't be sustained by Perth.**

**Hamish:** “There are bands our age that have been playing for four years and still pulling just over a hundred people to a show. I mean, why bother?”

**Toby:** “There's not any interest in it.”

**There's a few people that really care, but not many of 'em.**

**Hamish:** “I think we've all planned to go to Melbourne soon for an extended period. We can get gigs over there with some decent-sized bands, I hope. You only get one chance to play in a world-class band.”

**Chris:** “I've ruined my life for this band.”

**Hamish:** “Yeah, see, he's made a big sacrifice.”

**Toby:** “Are you sure it wasn't this band that ruined your life?”

**Chris:** “It ruined a lot of things, Toby.”

*(talk of Cooper's Sparkling Ale)*

**Hamish:** “I saw the Bats — remember when, uh, you went out and hugged Robert Scott, the Bats had Cooper's on their rider? That's one of the most advanced ...”

**Chris:** “Yeah, we're very good friends now. Good pals. Robbie.”

**Hamish:** “I really liked the Bats.”

**Chris:** “They were incredible. Such a classic, happy, up band.”

**Hamish:** “The Clean are another classic, a big influence on Mustang! I got to London and read this thing advertising the Clean and the Bats in this really small venue the size of the Shenton Park. Also missed Killdozer.”

**Chris:** “Oh, that's disappointing. They are the funniest band in the world, Killdozer. You could put their lyrics down on paper and they'd still be funny. Steve Albini is a special man too. He's a one-off.”

**You can talk about Mustang! reclaiming the world for geeks, but Steve Albini's been there and done that, man.**

**Chris:** “I pretend Hamish is my hero, but it's really Steve.”

**Toby:** “Hamish looks visibly disappointed.”

**Chris:** “I'm just ... He's skinny! The really good thing about Steve is that he's really skinny.”

**Hamish:** “Chris ... I'm ...”

**Chris:** “I like Hamish a bit more 'cos he's fat.”

**Hamish:** “I'm not fat! What d'you mean, I'm just filling out.”

**Chris:** “Those jowls wouldn't really count as fat. It's getting old.”

**Hamish:** “No ... that's fat.”

**Toby:** “Hamish is just getting comfortable, same as me.”

**Hamish:** “I'm just checking how I look with jowls. I'm gonna hit the rugby field again soon, so it'll all have to go by then.”

**Chris:** “Not in those year eight days, Hamish. Out on the rugby field, get nowhere near the ball.”

**Hamish:** “Yeah, we used to get beaten one hundred nil. The day we got beaten a hundred nil was one of the biggest milestones of my life. It's almost impossible to score a hundred points in a rugby game, but some school managed to do it to us.”

**That's great. How were you as a rugby player?**

**Hamish:** “Gutless.”

**Chris:** “Yeah. I don't like playing sports.”

**Hamish:** “Our biggest ... Before we got Toby and John in the band, Chris and I were about to go to London to get Mustang! going again, but we found better people than we could have found in London, because the people we would have found in London would have been English.

“We thought it was poor living in Perth and I have this friend in London who's a really full-on guitarist, so

we were going to go and get together with him. Even in London, he's finding it really difficult to get in bands.”

**Chris:** “We didn't think we could find anyone compatible — not as in musically, but as in people we'd really like and appreciate and adore a lot. I like every other member of Mustang! more than I like every member of my family.”

**Toby:** “Oh, Chris! That's different, y'know, 'like' and 'love'. Family's different, Chris.”

**Chris:** “I didn't choose my family, but I chose you guys. I'm glad you can laugh at me opening up to you, Tobes, but ...”

**Hamish:** “Oh, he's going to start sobbing in a minute.”

**Chris:** “Toby's a bit uncomfortable with it, but I can understand that. When you get a bit older and more mature, Toby ...”

**Toby:** “What, you mean when I get as old as you are, which is a year younger than me?”

**Chris:** “I don't mean old in years, Toby.”

**Chris, tell us about yourself. What's your favourite colour?**

**Chris:** “Blue.”

**What was the first record you bought?**

**Chris:** “Kiss, *Unmasked*.”

**Hamish:** “Yeah, that's funny, I bought *Double Platinum*.”

**Chris:** “No, sorry, it's all on *me* now.”

**Hamish:** “Oh, right, sorry.”

**Do you still like it?**

**Chris:** “Yes, I still have it. It's very crackly, but I still play it sometimes.”

**Hamish:** “I've got a collection of the first series of Kiss cards. I've got a full set. Remember Kiss cards?”

**What do you each do by day? Hamish, you're a philosopher and anthropologist ...**

**Hamish:** “Oh, well, I want to be.”

**Toby:** “One hour a week!”

**Hamish:** “Usually a pissed hour. *'Le' me tell you a few things, maaate ...*”

**Chris:** “I'm on a pension.”

**Toby:** “That doesn't suit the rock'n'roll image.”

**Hamish:** “He's too nervous to work. Look at his leg, it's nervous already.”

**Toby:** “I'm in my second year of Fine Arts at Curtin. Means I paint a picture every couple of weeks.”



## **What is the meaning of this thing called Mustang!?**

**Toby:** "It's about good times and music with your friends, I think. It's really interesting."

**Chris:** "We need an accomplishment somewhere. I enjoy the adulation it brings. John's got laid out of it. Bitch magnet! Bitch magnet!"

**John:** "These are lies. I cannot substantiate any of these accusations. No, no. No."

**Chris:** "You can't, but we can!"

**Toby:** "I think the attitude of the public is pretty dismal. Where are the girls yelling '*MUSTANG!*', y'know?"

**Hamish:** "There were only guys yelling last night. And let me tell you, that's a worry."

## **How does golf fit in with Mustang!?**

**Chris:** "It's very important to one half of the band. The other half of the band hates it."

**Toby:** "I played golf the last three days in a row. I enjoy golf. I love Sevvv Ballesteiros."

**Hamish:** "Chris and I enjoy golf insofar as it relates to *Caddyshack*, the greatest film ever made."

**Toby:** "If only golf was like *Caddyshack*."

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*The next section was recorded at the Shenton Park later that evening. Voices identified are Chris, Toby, David, Mark Cooper (Coop) and Mark Richardson (Mark).*

**Toby:** "... more so with cricket than with rock'n'roll."

**David:** "Tell us about cricket."

**Toby:** "I'm a champion cricketer, Dave, and have been since I was ten. When I was ten, I had a bowling average of 3.5 and won the Melville Association Trophy and this year I won the Suburban Turf Association Trophy for First Grade with an average of 12.5."

**Coop:** "And he plays guitar good, too."

**Chris:** "Damn good. That's why he's in Mustang!"

**Toby:** "I feel that if I improve my rock'n'roll abilities to the level of my cricket, I might be some sort of genius."

**David:** "What sort of genius?"

**Mark:** "The *right* sort of genius."

**Toby:** "People admire you so much more easily in sport than in rock'n'roll. In sport, it's so damned obvious: if you do well, you do well."

**Coop:** "There isn't the intellectual pull in being a sporting hero."

**David:** "There's no post-modernism in sport."

**Coop:** “Exactly!”

**Mark:** “That's why it's so much better than music.”

**Chris:** “Music's good when people don't try to improve on two guitars, a bass and drums.”

**Toby:** “And that's *exactly* what Mustang!'s all about!”

**Coop:** “Chris Gorman *is* Lou Reed!”

**Chris:** “I attempted Lou's latest hairstyle, but it didn't work too well.”

**David:** “He plays *The Blue Mask* every morning and every evening. I bought that record and haven't played it since.”

**Chris:** “I've got this shelf where there's all the records I bought in high school I don't play any more, and every one of Lou Reed's albums is in that shelf at the moment.”

**David:** “What about the Velvets?”

**Chris:** “Well, *White Light/White Heat*'s a good one, and the double live one. That's one of the funkier guitar-playing records ever, that one. Sterling Morrison is so funky. He drove the Velvets.”

**Coop:** “Well, he was the one who actually kept them in time. Fuckin' hell, the drummer didn't.”

**Toby:** “I think the thing we've got to understand about Lou is that he is the badness that makes bad good. He is. Lou is so bad that he's fuckin' brilliant.”

**Mark:** “Did I tell you I played golf with Baldie the other day?”

**Chris:** “Andrew Craw! The enigma behind the whole Perth scene!”

**Toby:** “Andrew Craw, he was my inspiration in rock'n'roll. Almost at the same time as Mark was. See, Andrew Craw, I believe he's a prophet. Songs like 'Stanley', and, erm ...”

**Chris:** “'Dogs'.”

**Toby:** “... 'Dogs', and 'Jazz', and what's that other one? *'It's the back of it/ It's the front of it'* ... Willa Benola, I think that's where the real inspiration was. I really wish Andrew would commit his whole life to rock'n'roll.”

**Chris:** “Naah, he's too old, he's burnt out.”

**Toby:** “He could wear a toupée, he'd be okay.”

**David:** “*He* can't wear a toupée! Wash your mouth out!”

**Chris:** “He could wear a toupée, but the sides of his head would be bald.”

**Coop:** “Andrew Craw is the definitive man with no hair; if he had a toupée, that would fuck everything up. The world would collapse if Andrew Craw had hair.”

*(Pizza arrives. Did you know that you can get pizza delivered to the beer garden of the Shenton Park Hotel? Takes some effort, but it can be done. They do ask for a phone number, though ... duh.)*

**Coop:** “Does anybody in the band actually like Mustang!?! That's the next question.”

**Chris:** “I have a very low opinion of Mustang!, but I have a very low opinion of everything I do.”

**Toby:** “I think Mustang!'s pretty good, really. Compared to most things, Mustang! is pretty cool.”

**Coop:** “Mustang! is better than cot death. Mustang! is better than nuclear war.”

**Chris:** “We're energy and rock'n'roll, that's all it is to Mustang! That's all we're interested in. That's all we care about.”

**David:** “Yeah, but do you get laid?”

**Chris:** “Well, I do get laid, but it's nothing to do with the band. Have you got two pieces of pizza there?”

**David:** “Yep.” (*This creation is the Self-Sandwiching Pizza: get the works with anchovy and olives and minus pineapple, then lay one slice on top of another slice and eat it. Heavenly.*)

**Coop:** “That's the act of a complete asshole! You know that, don't you?”

**David:** “No, you fold them together and you bite them in one go ...”

**Coop:** “No, that's called taking two slices at once, David.”

(*all laugh*) **Chris:** “You fuckin' wanker! You bastard!”

**Coop:** “You're a complete asshole!”

**David:** “I am not an asshole, I am an aesthete.”

**Coop:** “No, you're an asshole!”

**Chris:** “I can't believe you did *that*. I thought you were a good guy until you did *that*. Well, I'm going to grab that piece, then!”

**Coop:** “No, hang on, we're going to get democratic now. We'll have to divide that into four — leave *him* out, for a start — Thank you, sir. You're a gentleman and a scholar, unlike *some* ...”

**David:** “You've just never had two slices together. It's sooo fuckin' good, man. Look: two slices together is aesthetically perfect. It's like saying no-one should be allowed to enjoy sex because some people don't get laid. I mean, really.”

**Coop:** “OK, fair enough, point taken. It's a nice analogy, by the way.”

**Chris:** “This is quite good for a Pizza Hut pizza, isn't it?”

**Toby:** “I think it's the extra prawns that make it good.”

**Mark:** “Mark, have you got a job yet?”

**Coop:** “No. This is something that Mark ... A human being's worth is defined ...”

**Mark:** “Be a *useful* member of society.”

**Coop:** “A useful member of this wonderful society that we're all members of.”

**Chris:** “Why are you such a sponge, Mark?”

**David:** “Yeah. I kill Jews at Auschwitz — what do *you* do for a living? Huh?”

**Coop:** “I like you, Chris, you're an amazing dude.”

**Chris:** “From one sponge to another!”

**Mark:** “I don't blame Mark; he's a product of our welfare society. In fact, you're a victim, mate.”

**David:** “Listen: the welfare state is the *only* reason why Australia is heaven.”

**Toby:** “Coops, you should be in a band, 'cos you're good for nothing else. How many pars did you get today, Mark?”

**Mark:** “I got one on the first hole. I got one on par five as well.”

**Toby:** “I only got two. Played pretty fucked. I got forty-five. Made a few good drives.”

**Mark:** “Forty five, I got about fifty-seven. It was appalling.”

*(chat, chat ...)*

**Coop:** “That was the best happiness night of all time. This should be on tape. The night that Leisal met Toby, after the Bats gig. Everybody was classically happy and stuff. That was the best happiness night of all time. The Bats are the classic happiness band of all time.”

**Toby:** “I've got to admit, Leisal probably caught me in my best mood of all time.”

**Coop:** “Yeah. Everybody loved each other and she said Toby had the world's most interesting face.”

**David:** “Why are Mustang! going to take over the world? I know *how* you're going to do it, but I want to know *why*.”

**Toby:** “We like people.”

**Chris:** “People like us. We're intelligent, we're smart, we get up on stage, we put a good show on for the crowd, we play our hearts out. We work hard on ourselves, put a lot of thought into what we do, we try hard, get up on stage and we do it!”

*(Toby actually falls out of his seat laughing)*

“See, we should have started the Mustang! interview at this stage. But Hamish was such a wuss.”

**David:** “Tell me about music.”

**Chris:** “We're sort of New Zealand/American cross, we're sort of into the rock thing, but the melodic sort of ...”

**Toby:** “I just love playing music, I'm just really into playing music.”

**Chris:** “We're all into different things. The thing about Mustang! is that it's a lot of different people with a lot of different ideas.”

**David:** “Tell me what I don't know about Mustang!”

**Chris:** “Do you know about the work we do for the poor? Fifty percent of our income goes to the poor in India. We've got money coming in every week. We get cheques from all over.”

**Toby:** “We're *there* for the poor people.”

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# Mustang! 1994

*How do you do a truly great interview? You get five people who all feel reasonably comfortable with each other around a table with a couple cartons of Carlton Cold (say that six times fast!) and just let the tape roll ... Then edit like hell.*

*I did a 'Stangers piece about two years ago which was brilliantly funny but has sorta died of old age ... This one was done just after John Campbell left and includes new guitarist Brooke Kelly. August 1994, just before they and I moved to Melbourne.*

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**Chris:** "You don't *smoke*, do you, Dave?"

**Hamish:** "He says that to everyone. Thank Christ this country has a health system great enough to cope with the people who have debilitating illnesses from smoking."

**So ... tell me about this band of yours.**

**Hamish:** "That's what you said last time! You know how *that* degenerated!"

**Chris:** "We're not drunk this time."

**Yeah — it only got *really* good when we got down the pub. We discovered that you can actually get a pizza delivered to the beer garden of the Shenton Park Hotel. They still ask for the phone number, though ... duh.**

**Chris:** "That was the day Benny Hill died."

**Hamish:** "What a blessing!"

**Chris:** "No wonder we got so drunk."

**Hamish:** "One of the greatest things that's ever happened to comedy."

**Your beer's on the middle shelf.**

**Hamish:** "I thought you were plying us with booze tonight, David."

**Chris:** "We have to come up to interview standard first."

**So, new guitarist, huh? So, tell us about yourself, Brooke.**

**Brooke:** "Brooke Kelly. Kid Kelly."

**Hamish:** "We're really happy about Brooke because he's an asthmatic, too, and every guitarist in Mustang! suffers from asthma."

**Brooke:** "Everyone who plays a stringed instrument has a breathing problem."

**Where did you find Brooke?**

**Hamish:** "Well, it's the standard Mustang! story — meet someone, become friends with them, and if we're friends with someone then we hang around with them, then it's likely they're eventually going to be in the band. Mainly if they play guitar. Which is what has happened, all the time. We're most happy. You're looking a bit *ill*, there, Dave, inhaling thirty-six milligrams of Lucky Strike. Do you sort of forget

your own name after an inhalation of one of those, and say, *'Hiii, my name's Daaaaisy'?*'"

**I smoke 'cos a cigarette after work's cheaper than a beer after work.**

**Chris:** "That's very practical."

**Hamish:** "But you can't say, when push comes to shove, *'Look, I'll let the smokes do the talking.'* It doesn't quite pan out in the Aussie way of things, y'know. You go to the pub, you have a shouting match with someone and you let the beer do the talking after a while."

**What's your pedigree, Brooke?**

**Brooke:** "Um ... I've never really played in a band before. I've played on stage with friends and stuff."

**Hamish:** "The Kelly Gang."

**Brooke:** "My dad's sort of been in a pub rock band with my brother. It's in the blood, I suppose. I suppose I've grown up around music, but I've never really been in bands."

**Hamish:** "We auditioned Brooke by playing all of the Xanadu soundtrack and seeing if he could match up with all those licks; and he scrubbed up pretty well."

**Brooke:** "It just so happens that that was one of my personal faves as a child prodigy."

**How old are you now?**

**Chris:** "Fifteen."

**Hamish:** "Well, it's not far off!"

**Chris:** "There's me, thirty-two, and down at the other end there's Brooke, fifteen."

**You've been aging very fast.**

**Hamish:** "That's seven years in the last three months, Chris."

**Chris:** "I've been hard at it. It's been hammer and tongs the whole time."

**At least your teenage acne's gone.**

**Chris:** "Yeah. I'm into middle-aged acne now."

H: "Hits-the-booze acne."

**So when's Mike dribbling his way over here?**

**Hamish:** "Dribbling's the word after his good news. The Bob Forster thing. As Chris said, it vindicated Mike's whole involvement in bands. A dream come true for him."

**Chris:** "It's the greatest day of his life. This guy from RTR interviewed Robert Forster and asked him what his favourite Perth band was."

**Brooke:** "And how did he know about Mustang!?"

**Chris:** "Ahh, fuckin' Mustang!, it's ..."

**Brooke:** "The name!"

**Chris:** “The name!”

**Brooke:** “It’s a mark of quality. It’s an institution.”

**Hamish:** “Hey, did you hear about our *rival* Mustang!?”

### **The Aboriginal country band in Melbourne? Tell us about them.**

**Hamish:** “The fifth member of Mustang!, the great Brett Woodward, rang them up and said, ‘*there’s this other band called Mustang!, they’re coming over here, they’ve got the name registered*’ and all this bullshit, and the guy said, ‘*ahh, no worries. Are you their manager?*’ and Brett said, ‘*Uh ... yyyeeah ...*’ and the guy said, ‘*you manage a lot of bands?*’ and Brett said, ‘*nnoo,*’ and the guy said, ‘*oh, two of my sons won Golden Guitar awards at Tamworth and, mate, do you want to manage them?*’ But Brett respectfully declined, having too many commitments as far as rock writing and Los Mustangos! are concerned.”

*(Mention of Andrew Masterson’s brilliant Age piece speaking of Bob Mould’s most recent new band, ‘Beaster’ ... ahem.)*

### **Bob Mould is gay; how does this affect Mustang!?**

**Hamish:** “We don’t know him. We certainly don’t take any offence to that.”

**Brooke:** “I just read the other day that the bass-player out of the Breeders is lesbian.”

### **Kelley Deal is a Republican, which is much scarier. The Christmas *Melody Maker* had Kurt Cobain interviewing Kim Deal and asking her what it was like coping with a sister with this deformity.**

**Hamish:** “Well, that’s true. It’s like someone below the age of thirty-five voting Liberal or something. *(Hamish is a Labor voter since birth.)* Alexander Downer looks like the real suckhole who got head prefect at school or something.”

**Chris:** “Got head-butted.”

**Brooke:** “Hey, *I* got head prefect at school!”

all: “Wahey!”

**Brooke:** “That was in Darkan and only two people went for it.”

**Hamish:** “And you neglected to mention that there were only three people at the school.”

**Brooke:** “I actually went to the same school as Paul out of Worm Farm. Darkan is about two hundred kilometres down south. It’s what the band is named after.”

**Hamish:** “I told all these people that our new guitarist is from Darkan, and they all go, ‘*oh, nooo ...*’ I have to always suffix it with ‘*the town, the town!*’”

**Brooke:** “The story behind them is that they drove through the town once, apparently ...”

**Hamish:** “And they got attacked and hassled *Deliverance*-style. One of them was told, ‘*Boy, you sure have got pretty lips ... would you like to squeal like a pig?*’”

**Chris:** “And he loved it, hence the name Darkan!”

**Hamish:** “How about the CD, when’s it coming out? Well, funny you should mention that. It’ll be out by

the time we get to the big smoke.”

**Tell us about the Melbourne move.**

**Hamish:** “It’s an exodus. It’s one of those loser things: ‘*yeah, we’re gonna move to Melbourne and make it!*’ Then you get to Melbourne, play about two gigs with shitty lineups at shitty venues and come back with your tail between your legs.”

*(pause for phone call from a very late Mike Staude)*

**Hamish:** “Is Staude really smashed out of his mind?”

**He was at 75 Carr Street, not Cowle.**

**Hamish:** “What, he borrowed their phone?! Imagine Staude rolling into your house really pissed and going, ‘*can I use your phone?*’”

**Chris:** “In his best trackie top.”

**He could define a whole new style there.**

**Hamish:** “He already has. I walked past one of those real wank-boy alternative clothing shops and in the window was one of those trackie tops, and my reaction was (*à la Colonel Klink*) ‘*SCHTAAUU-DEEE!*’”

**It’ll be track-suit tops and vinyl jackets. It takes a certain sense of style to carry off a brown vinyl button-up jacket.**

**Hamish:** “Whenever you’re wearing one of these things, you feel like you should be reaching for a shoulder-holster.”

**Brooke:** “We’ve got two track-suit tops, two vinyl jackets.”

**As Chris Hann said:** “*Ten records died to make this jacket; don’t take it lightly.*”

*(Staude pours himself in the door)*

**Hamish:** “Mick, so what do you think about the good news?”

**Mike:** “Well, green and purple, I don’t know about green and purple.”<sup>[1]</sup>

**Hamish:** “Yeah, besides that. I mean Bob Forster.”

**Chris:** “Oh, he’s getting all shy now.”

**Hamish:** “Ha! Let me point out that Mike’s rolling on some deodorant now under his clothes, after a splash of Ventolin. And his man-bag.”

**So, Robert Forster! Have you heard him say these words?**

**Mike:** “Well, I hooked up with Richard Forster (*Salty & Delicious zine*). I figured, ‘*get in through the back door.*’ They’re relatives. Just like Paul Williams (*Molasses*) and Kimmy Williams. Nephew. Hey — Molasses rock. I reckon they’re the best band for fuckin’ ages. I think it’s appropriate that we’re leaving and they’re beginning. What about Kitty Magic? Can we talk about Kitty Magic?”

**Hamish:** “Can we talk about other Perth bands that we really hate and we can bag, ’cos we’re leaving?”

**Mike:** “Nah, we’ll talk about Perth bands that we love.”



**Chris:** “Let’s focus on the positive.”

**Hamish:** “You ever seen that Vincent Ward film, *Map Of The Human Heart*? I must admit, I love Vincent Ward’s work. Been a big fan of his *oeuvre* for quite some time. But in *Map Of The Human Heart*, Arvik as a boy looks like the drummer from Kitty Magic. A bulked-up Arvik. So let’s get onto stuff we like to bag, which always spices up a ...”

**Mike:** “East Perth!”

**Chris:** “I just seem to like everything and everyone nowadays.”

**Chris, you’ll be a great member of the music industry. Brown vinyl jacket, loves everyone ...**

**Chris:** “I think a lot of people are impressed. A lot of people.”

**Hamish:** “That’s the sort of outfit people wear when they come out of being in prison for fifteen years.”

**Chris:** “Hamish took my metal wristband off me, I’m not allowed to wear it.”

**Mike:** “This is from Life In Focus.”

**Chris:** “They do a lot of work for single fathers, like when the mums get chucked in prison for shoplifting and stuff.”

**That guy (Chris Bignell — election leaflet on pin-up board) worked at Life In Focus. He ran in the State election as a good Christian.**

**Chris:** “Yeah, a good Christian who lined his pockets. No, no, it’s true. They were on Howard Sattler. Hey, I love Life In Focus. They love to sponsor Perth rock. They sponsored me and Sassy Gav’s expedition to Melbourne earlier this year. We did a lot of charity collecting, hanging out in front of post offices and shopping centres in Hilton and places like that. Made a lot of new friends. Hugged a lot of people. They helped me because I helped them. It was a reciprocal thing.”

**Hamish:** “I can’t believe Sassy Gav got so pissed that night with Lorne. Was he pissed or just sick?”

**Chris:** “No, that pizza gave him food poisoning, on top of drinking twenty-five cans.”

**Mike:** “Geoff (*from O!*) had three loaves of bread at his place, all of which were mouldy.”

**I dunno, these kids, they just don’t know how to run a household.**

**Chris:** “Those crazy, wacky, zany O! guys.”

**The great thing about the scene at the moment is the kids all coming to shows *and* getting into it.**

**Hamish:** “They’re even getting into Mustang!, which is weird.”

**Did you see this month’s *Rolling Stone*? Michael Dwyer wrote an article on Perth bands. All the Jacuzzi International bands<sup>[2]</sup> were missing, oddly enough — what a surprise.**

**Chris:** “Isn’t it strange how that happened!”

**Hamish:** “The article was basically the WAMI<sup>[3]</sup> bands that kissed butt. The JI bands weren’t in there because they’ve never been involved in that.”

**Mike:** “Everyone I’ve talked to so far has concluded that if they had been included, they’d have been

mightily dismayed and may have given up.”

**The scene is differentiating itself, and that’s good.**

**Hamish:** “It was like a press-kit thing, where he just got the press-kit and wrote it all out.”

**Chris:** “So they can put it back into their press kit. Just telling it like it is because they probably haven’t worked it out yet — Lamia and Yummy Fur have exactly the same background in their photos.”

**Hamish:** “I was happy to see the panel van thing in *Rolling Stone*. Boy. They had some fuckin’ amazing sin bins and shaggin’ wagons in there. If the van’s-a-rockin’, don’t bother knockin’, I believe.”

**Brooke:** “The statistic in there: one in four women between the age of twenty-five and thirty-five lost their virginity in the back of a panel van.”

**Chris:** “Well done Australia!”

**Hamish:** “That’s why I love this country.”

**Mike:** (*playing with beans*) “These handy rip-tops are good.”

**Hamish:** “You can scull them. Does anyone mind me talking about V. Balsara and his Singing Sitar? Have you heard that record yet, that my old man had? It’s this Indian guy playing hits of the ’60s on a sitar with the full instrumented backing. ‘Dr Zhivago’ ... but the outstanding track was ‘Strangers In The Night’, which was quite moving because he does all the vocal parts on the sitar ...”

**Mike:** “Did he play ‘Knights In White Satin’?”

**Hamish:** “No, this was before that, mate. This was *real* music. He plays ‘Yummy, Yummy, Yummy’ too. The band’s playing and then you hear the ‘*yummy, yummy, yummy*’ bit come in on the sitar. It’s *moving*.”

**Mike:** “I bought the *Rolf Harris Book Of Aesthetics*.”

**Hamish:** “Yeah. Rolf Harris wrote an art book, which is quite outstanding.”

**Mike:** “It was the best art book I’ve ever seen. I don’t know much about art ...”

**Hamish:** “... but you know what Rolf likes!”

**Brooke:** “What does Rolf like?”

H: “Photorealism, Hockney, *brut*, he’s into van Gogh too. I used to go out with a Canadian girl — this was in the heady days of swinging Blighty — and this girl went, ‘*yeah, I’m staying with this Australian guy ...*’ and it turns out her friend was renting the granny flat at the bottom of this big place in Maidenhead. And I went out to meet her, and this Australian voice went, ‘*yeah, yeah, I’ll open the gate for ya,*’ and it turned out to be none other than Monsieur le Wobble-board.”

**You met a star.**

**Hamish:** “*Hung out* with. I said, ‘*hey, Rolf, let’s listen to a few records.*’ We put on *Led Zeppelin IV*, and I said to Rolf, ‘*hey, you know that song “Stairway To Heaven”?*’ (*all laugh*) ‘*It’s bullshit, isn’t it? I reckon you should take the wobble-board to this bastard.*’

**Mike:** “Rolf reckons he’d never heard it before he did it.”

**Hamish:** “I said, ‘*Rolf, get out the wobble-board, y’bastard, and go ...*’ (*makes wobble-board sounds*) It

was good, we had a jam with the wobble-board. I was on wobble-board, but he was on didgeridoo.”

**Are you claiming that this is the truth?**

**Hamish:** “It is the truth. I met Rolf ’cos the girl I was going out with was staying with Rolf. And it turns out he has a daughter called Bindi, which is a great Australian name for a dog.

“I knew his career was flagging, it was the least I could do. I don’t wanna sorta blow my own trumpet, but I just want to say that I am totally responsible for Rolf Harris having a hit with ‘Stairway To Heaven’.”

**Chris:** “It wasn’t something that thought-out; it’s just like, a couple of Aussie blokes overseas, having a beer ...”

**Mike:** “A foreign country.”

**Chris:** “... hanging out in their thongs and stubbies and singlets ...”

**Mike:** “What about ‘Sun Arise’?”

**Chris:** “Alice Cooper does a great version of that.”

**Mike:** “Does he?”

**Chris:** “Yes, he does. On *Killer*, I think.”

**Mike:** “And who wrote the lyrics to ‘Sun Arise’? Harry Butler<sup>[4]</sup>.”

**Chris:** “See, it’s all connected, it all fits in.”

**Mike:** “Harry Butler was a very good friend of mine’s Dutch teacher. When I was translating all the Bailer Space lyrics.”

**Hamish:** “Mike did the complete Bailer Space lyrics into Dutch. That was part of Mike and my year of bad craziness.”

**Hamish, tell us all about William Holden, with reference to that great song of yours about him.**

**Hamish:** “William Holden was one of the last stars of Hollywood.”

*(all laugh)*

**Chris:** “I don’t wanna hear this. I’m not handling it, I’m telling you now.”

**Mike:** “This is not art ...”

**Hamish:** “William Holden wasn’t about art, let’s face it, he was about being real! He was about being casual, about looking good ... you ever seen that film *The Counterfeit Trader*? Bill Holden at his most fantastic! No-one in the last ... except for Bob Mitchum, of course — we had a whole album about Bob ...”

**Mike:** “Your solo album.”

**Hamish:** “... but no-one’s done it like William Holden since. No-one’s set up a safari shootin’ ranch in Africa with Stephanie Powers like William Holden did.”

**What’s in this second lot of recording?**

**Mike:** “‘Bill Holden Casual’, Jon’s epic called ‘Moisty’ ...”

**Is that the one with ten false endings?**

**Mike:** “It’s the one based on a Blue Tile Lounge song based on a Baked song based on a Bailer Space song ...”

**Hamish:** “... which is based on a Rapeman song ...”

**Mike:** “... which is based on a Joy Division song. ‘Poor Queensland’, we had to do that.”

**Chris:** “Just wait ’til you hear the poetry involved in that.”

**Mike:** “It’s Hamish’s life story in a song. We had to do that.”

**Brooke:** “One of the few I know. And love.”

**Mike:** “And ‘Hey Kingsley’. There’s four songs. They’ll never see the light of day. We’ve moved on. We recorded them two weeks after we started that lineup of Mustang!”

**Did you do the vocal on “William Holden” in one take or did you wank around with it?**

**Hamish:** “Yep, one take.”

**Mike:** “It sounds classic. It’s the best vocal on it.”

**So when’s your CD coming out? Now, this was two lineups ago and it’s only just being mastered ...**

**Hamish:** “Well, at least I think we’ve realised they’re dinkum about it, seeing as they’ve actually mastered it ...”

**Chris:** “We’re not doing it for money ’cos it’s mostly Toby’s songs anyway.”

**Mike:** “We’re doing it for Toby’s money.”

**Hamish:** “We’ve got another CD recorded which we’re going to have to whip one of the guitar tracks off and get the Kid to re-record it.”

**Chris:** “We’ll have to change all the vocals so I’m singing all the songs.”

**You said you weren’t going to bring this CD out as a CD, but as compilation tracks.**

**Hamish:** “Well, that was Mike’s idea. Just offer these songs around and get them out that way.”

**So: what is this thing called Mustang! all about?**

**Hamish:** “Let’s face it, Dave, we’re a band that likes the cheese board being passed around after dinner. I think that says it all. Remember the cheese board? Doug was saying that he was really worrying about the cheese board being passed around before dessert, which I think is an etiquette *faux pas*.”

**Mike:** “Yeah, I cleaned up all the plates, all the side plates, and Mrs (???) said, ‘*Uh, Staude ... there’s cheese to come yet.*’”

*(all laugh)*

**Hamish:** “I think Mike did the right thing, clearing the side plates, because you finish dessert and the cheese board comes out!”

**Chris:** “You have a coffee and cheese.”

**Mike:** “Yeah, they chucked the cheese board out *before* dessert.”

**Hamish:** “No, no, *no*.”

**Chris:** “A bit too free and easy, that household.”

**Brooke:** “Are we talking about cheese?”

**Mike:** “Cheese boards. Claret cheese, blue vein ...”

**Brooke:** “I always thought it came out *before*. Before the whole thing.”

**Mike:** “That’s down in Darkan, mate, not Perth.”

**Hamish:** “It’s between the last bottle of Hermitage or Cab Sav and the port, the cheese board comes out.”

**Brooke:** “Couldn’t you bring it out earlier on ...”

**Hamish:** “It’s just not done. It’s just not done.”

**Chris:** “God bless you. Out of the mouths of babes ...”

*(chat about Craig Hallsworth and the Healers)*

**Chris:** “I was the person who used to go to all the Healers gigs and yell shit at them every time they’d get Lorne up on stage.”

**Hamish:** “Remember just after I got back from Europe, that total night of bad craziness that we had ...”

**Chris:** “Oh, I don’t remember *any* of *that*.”

**Hamish:** “Well, of course you don’t. That was why it was full of bad craziness.”

**Chris:** “I remember reversing into a parked car when I was leaving.”

**Hamish:** “You were there that night, weren’t you, Mick?”

**Mike:** “I don’t remember, I was in the van.”

**Hamish:** “Yeah, all Mike could hear was, ‘*Fuckin’ bullshit!*’ ‘*Yeah, good one!*’”

**Chris:** “When the Healers played at the Northbridge Festival one year, Craig kindly offered to punch my head in after the gig.”

**Hamish:** “It was very big of him.”

**Mike:** “Oh, did he really? I had a chat to him after that gig as well. That was before I knew you, of course, Chris.”

**Chris:** “That was before I became the less intolerant me. The one that likes everyone now.”

**Hamish:** “And is liked.”

**Chris:** “Yes, I’m very popular.”

**Are you going to grow back the Afro, Chris?**

**Chris:** "I'm trying, David. Some nights it works, some nights it doesn't."

**Mike:** "We saw *Q Magazine* today and there's a special on the Afro."

**Chris:** "Mick Taylor's got the best one."

**What happened to your previous guitarist?**

**Mike:** "It's called bad vibes, Dave. We got plenty."

**Chris:** "We've got the touring machine now."

**Hamish:** "This is the Henry Rollins tour-tour-tour. This is the penultimate Mustang! lineup."

**Mike:** "The ultimate one is with the saxophone player."

**Hamish:** "Free jazz. The Roland Kirk."

**Chris:** "We can't discuss that yet."

**I really loved what's now the previous lineup of Mustang! ...**

**Hamish:** "But you said you loved that show last Sunday night, and that gig John didn't play."

**Mike:** "He played on three songs."

**Chris:** "He played on his songs. A lot of the time he was looking at me and drinking beer and I was pulling strange faces at him."

**Hamish:** "We used to get this bullshit about the other guys being really great, but Toby wouldn't play on songs, and John wouldn't play on songs, so I figure it wasn't them being great, it was three guys dedicated to rockin' being great. And now we've got four guys dedicated to rockin'."

**Chris:** "We just want everyone to pull together, we don't want someone anti- the band."

**Hamish:** "This big ego-personality thing is just so poor."

**Mike:** "John believed in tension."

**Chris:** "He's an artist. He's a very tortured artist. But obviously, we loved his work to ask him to join the band in the first place."

**Hamish:** "Rejoin the band. I think it was that we didn't know any other guitarists at that point."

**Mike:** "Dick Fische (*Richard Sewell*) wasn't available."

**Jon was in the first Mustang!, the three-piece of him, Hamish and Chris. I never saw that lineup ...**

**Hamish:** "We thought at the time that it was pretty atrocious. *The First Six Months* tape was pretty good, I thought. Well, *funny*. But we'd wanted to get our shit together ... there was a lot of bad craziness."

**Chris:** "The first Mustang! was me and Jon being really strange and fucked up and never playing good gigs."

**Hamish:** "And me being *fantastic*."

**I must admit, I was scared on Sunday when you pulled out the flying-V bass again.**

**Hamish:** “The flying-V bass is Mustang!”

**Chris:** “That’s here to stay.”

**Mike:** “I thought it was gone.”

**Brooke:** “I thought that was its final gig, actually, when I saw it being treated that way at the end.”

**Hamish:** “That’s how ... I’ve done worse with that bass and it’s always come through for me, so I can’t just spit it in the face. That guitar has been very good to me. I’ve treated it like shit ...”

**Chris:** “It’s like a woman.”

**Hamish:** “Like a crazy woman. God knows I’ve had plenty of them.”

**Mike:** “Hamish is the only guy who knows how to handle it.”

**Hamish:** “And crazy women. What were we talking about? Previous lineups of the band. Then we got Toby and John (*Henderson*). Jon went to go to Albany, Chris and I both liked Pool Floatation Device a lot, we both liked drinking a lot and having fun ...”

**Chris:** “We used to go to Mangoes every Tuesday. It was very beautiful. We started out good, but so many times as we found out, if you’re interested in hanging out with people and having fun, as soon as they join the band they pull a big ego thing and they get all bossy and want to ruin the fun.”

**You getting a sense of foreboding yet, Brooke?**

**Brooke:** “Oh, I don’t know ...”

**Mike:** “He knows. We’re the bosses.”

**Hamish:** “It’s like having a kid brother in the band.”

**Chris:** “We were out buying clothes for him today.”

**Brooke:** “What did you buy me?”

**Mike:** “I got you a great Emu Export T-shirt.”

**So how was it when Toby left? Did you actually sit down and write a whole pile of songs to compensate?**

**Mike:** “Yeah. It’s like doing your homework, you just have to do it. So we did it. The new songs were better than the old ones. They’re the right length, they’re snazzy ... Toby left, we knew we needed new songs. Good songs. Jon was there, Hamish wrote three new ones ...”

**The Toby lineup sounded like it was limping for a long time.**

**Hamish:** “Yeah. Toby wouldn’t want to play any new songs. He wouldn’t want to work on them.”

**Did Toby leave or was he pushed?**

**Hamish:** “Oh, it was pretty mutual.”

**Mike:** “He left. At the airport in Sydney, I said, ‘*what’s going on?*’ and he goes, ‘*I’m not interested any more.*’”

**Hamish:** “Touring with Toby was just unbearable. I didn’t have much to do with it ... Chris and Mike had more to do with it and they were just going up the wall.”

**Chris:** “Didn’t interfere with my fun.”

**Mike:** “Didn’t interfere with my fun either. But five pairs of jocks over twenty-one days ... I couldn’t work it out.”

**Chris:** “Especially in Sydney.”

**Hamish:** “The humidity was almost evil in Sydney. I wear boxer shorts and I was showering twice a day and I was still feelin’ a bit sticky. You’ve got to bathe ... and change ...”

**Chris:** “My favourite memory of touring with Toby was me and Mike doing his washing for him.”

**So how did that first tour go?**

**Mike:** “Classic!”

**Hamish:** “We had a fuckin’ great time!”

**Chris:** “That was the best experience of my life.”

**Hamish:** “The best gig we played was at the Punter’s Club with the ‘Baits — Spiderbait and Christbait — then at the Vulcan in Sydney.”

**Mike:** “The last Sydney gig was good. The Cosmic Psychos one was good. The good gigs were fantastic. The only bad one was with Defryme.”

**Hamish:** “We played with Defryme, they had this huge fuckin’ PA and they wouldn’t let us use the foldback. This was in the big room at the Esplanade and they said to keep the PA right down. They said, *‘we paid for the foldback, you can’t have the foldback,’* so consequently we didn’t know what the fuck was happening on stage ...”

**Chris:** “We had some wild times with the crazy guys from Ammonia in Sydney. That was pretty good. We played our last gig and they’d just got there, we saw them play the night before — Hamish didn’t ...”

**Mike:** “And, get this, one of them hadn’t had a piece of fruit for three days!”

**Chris:** “Don’t pre-empt my story, Mike.”

**Mike:** “Sorry.”

**Chris:** “Anyway ... they said, *‘come back to the hotel room, have a few drinks,’* we thought, *‘wahey! last night of the tour, a bunch of Perth boys in town, let’s paint the town red,’* and so we went back to the hotel room and met up with them, and their idea of drinks was going down the 7-Eleven and getting Slurpees. They’re like Icees, crushed ice and flavouring. Then the bass-player, Simon, was going, *‘I can’t believe I haven’t eaten a piece of fruit for three or four days, what’s going on, my life’s falling apart, what am I doing to myself?’*”

**Mike:** “Hey, get a fruit rider!”

**Chris:** “You need a fruit roadie to take care of all your fruit needs.”

**Hamish:** “That time I saw Buffalo Tom, and the guy said, *‘hey, Alan, can I have an apple?’* and I thought, *‘fuck, he’s getting some crack cocktail off his roadie,’* and this guy tossed him a piece of fruit, and I just



went, 'Get **FUCKED!** You fuckin' dickhead! What are you doing? Get a dog up ya!' What a sack o' shit! I couldn't believe it!"

**C'mon, you gotta keep fit for full-tilt rock'n'roll. Aerosmith are the greatest straight-edge band in the world. Orange juice and working out!**

**Chris:** "Yeah, they've had their fun!"

**Hamish:** "That's the best thing about these old rock'n'roll bands who did all the drugs, saying, '*don't do it like I did.*'"

**Brooke:** "Did anyone get a gig out of those Sony nights?" (*Perth bands playing for Sony execs stopping through town a few months ago*)

**Mike:** "Favourite Game, Ammonia and someone else."

**Hamish:** "When you do something like that, it just gives you a small use-by date, y'know."

**Mike:** "Oh, do they?"

**Mustang!: indie as fuck!**

**Hamish:** "Yeah! Damn right!"

**Chris:** "Hey — we're here, we've got a platform, we're gonna use it! We gotta tell the kids, y'know, don't fuckin' sell out, do what you want to do, have a good time!"

**Yeah, otherwise you'll die! Like KURT DID!**

**Hamish:** "Do drugs, don't sign to a major! Unless, of course, they offer you such a ridiculous amount of money where you can buy a house and settle down. *Then* sign to a major. The Jesus Lizard said to Warners, '*give us a million bucks and we'll sign,*' then, as David Yow said, '*they laughed; we laughed; and it was all over.*' And now they're on Warners — 'cos they laughed!"

**Or you could do like Sonic Youth did — don't sell out, just become really bad ...**

**Mike:** "That's debatable."

**Hamish:** "I was really encouraged reading reviews of the new one when some dickhead says '*it's not a patch on Goo or Dirty*' and I'm going, fuck, this album, could be pretty good! *Dirty's* one of the worst ... Remember when '100%' came out? At the Big Day Out, people were going (*punches the air in time*). That's *bad*. That's a *bad* thing."

**Mike:** "It's a great ad."

**Hamish:** "Yeah. They should release that as an ad for McDonald's or Hungry Jack's: '*A hundred per-cent/ Aussie beef ...*'"

**Chris:** "'*I should give to you sweet child ... I'm just waiting for you to say/ This Aussie Burger's mine ...*' We worked out the whole song."

**Mike:** "The last song on the new album should be an ad for Swan Dry."

**Hamish:** "They were in Perth for about a day and they got into Swan Dry! That's fuckin' great!"

**Mike:** "It doesn't take long, mate. It's a great, great beer."

**Hamish:** “That’s why this state is the greatest state in the whole world. I’m proud to be a Sandgroper, how about you guys?”

**Mike:** “Yep. That’s why we’re going to Melbourne.”

**People from Perth just go to Melbourne and take the fuckin’ town over.**

**Hamish:** “Yep. Scientists ...”

**The Woozy people.**

**Mike:** “Nicky Winmar.”

**Hamish:** “Barry Cable. Brett Woodward. Kim Salmon!”

**Chris:** “Andrew Masterson. Brett Woodward.”

**Hamish:** “Did we mention Brett?”

**Chris:** “He’s actually probably the best person to interview for Mustang! ’cos he’s the funniest.”

**Mike:** “As funny as you, Chris?”

**Hamish:** “Funnier.”

**Chris:** “I’m not a patch on that guy.”

**Mustang!**

**Chris:** “We’re going to be as big as the Kryptonics.”

**What have the last two years in Perth been like for Mustang!?**

**Hamish:** “Shit.”

**Chris:** “Great. I had a lot of fun times.”

**Say from August ’92 onwards, when Mike joined.**

**Chris:** “That’s when it got better.”

**Mike:** “The fun times. Party times. Less tension.”

**Hamish:** “Mike brought the fun back into the band. Mike was my call. I take full responsibility.”

**Chris:** “I got all the weirdos.”

**Mike:** “Hamish caught me when I had a broken hand.”

**Hamish:** “I worked Mike through his injuries and stuff. I’ve known Mike since I was four.”

**Mike:** “Have you seen the Perth band Ash?”

**Brooke:** “I have. A Black Sabbath sort of thing.”

**Mike:** “Anna Zanella.”

**Brooke:** “They’re with her?”

**Hamish:** “Bup-bauwr.” (*a universally applicable conversational sound-effect ©H. Fitzsimmons — the sound of someone else’s clanger hitting reality.*)

**Chris:** “They’re gonna rock the foundations.”

**Hamish:** “As soon as Verona fired Anna, they were ringing every band they could think of trying to get gigs with them.”

**Mike:** “They rang me saying, ‘how’s it going, what you been up to?’”

**Hamish:** “They rang me and said, ‘you guys wanna play a gig with us?’ I said, ‘I dunno, speak to Mike.’ The promoter over east (*Steve Pav*) wanted O! to play just before Pavement, but Anna said, ‘no, no, Ammonia have a bigger media profile ...’”

**Mike:** “Ammonia are getting four-fifty and O! are getting one-fifty.”

**Chris:** “No-one’s going to see Ammonia.”

**Louise (*Dickinson*) says that Ammonia might fluke a hit one day.**

**Mike:** “That’s a pretty good call. Louise’s last analysis of Perth music (*Lemon #16½*) was one of the best I’ve seen for ages.”

**Everyone hated it, but ...**

**Mike:** “... it was pretty spot-on.”

**Chris:** “I like some of the bands she slagged.”

**Mike:** “The Blues are gonna win the Premiership.” (*snicker — ed*)

**Hamish:** “Buuull-shit! The Dockers, mate. The Dockers ’95.”

**Brooke:** “I don’t reckon they’ll go any good for at least three years. I think they’ll start off pretty reasonable, but nothing special.”

**Mike:** “For the first half-season, they’ll be in the top eight.”

**Fremantle are gonna be a top team.**

**Hamish:** “I think it’ll take ’em about five years. I think the Freo people who play for the Eagles will go down to the Dockers.”

**They won’t be able to handle blow-wave football.**

**Mike:** “I think Ben Allen will be playing for the Dockers next year and he’ll be fuckin’ classic. Nicky Winmar ... one of the Jakoviches ...”

**Chris:** “The formation of a Fremantle team is even making me think of putting *my* boots back on to help them out.”

**Exactly. They’ve got spirit already.**

**Hamish:** “Which Jakovich playing for the Eagles will go to the Dockers?”

**Brooke:** “Alan. He keeps getting fined for abusing people.”

**Mike:** “He’s crazy and feisty.”

**Chris:** “And that’s the sort of person that Freo needs.”

**Brooke:** “I’d just like to drop into the conversation that anyone that would like to play for West Arthur Football Club ... they’ll get paid.”

**Hamish:** “Is that Arthur River?”

**Brooke:** “No, that’s Darkan’s football team.”

**Hamish:** “Have you ever been to Arthur River, the town?”

**Brooke:** “Yeah, yeah. They used to pay me twenty bucks a game to go down there last year.”

**Mike:** “Do you know how to play *sport*?”

**Brooke:** “Hey, I’m a sports champion!”

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[1]The Fremantle Dockers strip. The AFL commissioners have mistakenly let in a team that not only won’t consist of blond permed pop-star wannabes but will be bloody brilliant, and the 1995 or 1996 Grand Final will be Dockers vs Eagles or Dockers vs Crows. Sorry to have to tell you this.

[2]Including: Mustang!, Baked, O!, Wooden Fische, Blue Tile Lounge, Worm Farm ... bands with a close association with Club 96, JI Headquarters. A good sample of the best Perth had to offer at the time.

[3]The semi-industry bands that swept the WA Music Industry Awards this year.

[4]The naturalist, not the ziner.

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2012 note: Why the *fuck* was I expressing an actual opinion on football? Where the hell did that come from?

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# Perth News

## *Party Fears #19, late 1994*

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Way back in January (you remember January, don't you?), David said, "*yeah, you can start getting the news bit together.*" Well, it's October and the magazine's finally finished. Because of the inordinate time delay, what follows is basically what's happened since the beginning of the year, plus other bits and pieces I thought were worth throwing in.

As much as has happened since the beginning of the year, much remains the same: a lack of venues, and ... well, much has happened on the local scene since last we met. Unfortunately, the lack of venues and suitable gigs seems to be one of the few ongoing features.

- **AND AN A** are **David Kelsall** (*v, k*), **Tony Roncevich** (*g, b*) and **Jurek Wybraniac** (*programming*). The group effectively split back in '88 when previous member Brett Gillespie moved to Melbourne. In mid '91 David and Tony decided to get the group up and going again, but it wasn't until Jurek joined in January '93 as a non-performing member that it got going in earnest. The group gig erratically, when they feel like it, much as they've always done.

- **ANIMAL KINGDOM** are currently **Ross "Vegas" Thompson** (*g, v*), **Michael O'Brien** (*b*) and **Andrea Gaynor** (*violin*). They're currently on the hunt for a new drummer. They began to come together after Michael left Botticelli's Angel in March '93; he teamed up with Ross and original drummer Pete (ex-Dixie Outlaws) and they played with this line-up until February '94 when they added Andrea. Didn't gig much in the next few months. Pete left in June and since then they've been looking for the elusive drummer. Once found they plan to gig rather more often, with a view to recording some time soon for a CD release next year. While the band have been on hold, Ross has been playing occasional solo shows.

- **BENJI** are **Jon Scull** (*g, v*), **Michael Newman** (*d*) and new boy **Rod Ewan** (*b*), ex-Rust. Came together with this lineup in April, after previous bassist Stuart Medley decided to follow his heart and move to the country. The last lineup recorded six or seven songs for a proposed cassette and these should hopefully be released soonish, though there's talk of some new recordings as well.

- **BING** are **Myles Durham** (*d, menace*), **Mark Richardson** (*g, v, pop sensibility*) and **Lorne Clements** (*b, v, facial contortions*). They surprised many by regrouping after the demise of **BAKED** back in March. Rehearsed on and off for four months before debuting in August. They're a step or two on from Baked, with the three piece format working surprisingly well. Looks like they may bypass putting out a tape and go for a CD release.

- **BLUE TILE LOUNGE** are **Dan Erikson** (*g, v*), **Gabrielle Cotton** (*g, v*), **Alex Stevens** (*d*) and **Howard Healy** (*b, v*). Have begun playing rather more regularly of late. They are finally beginning to think about recording, but really should have had something out by now. At this stage it looks like Mr. Lachlan Tuppin and his trusty eight-track will be doing the honours. Dan and Gabrielle have also been playing occasional gigs as a duo.

- **BOB'S LOVE CHILD** have been hard at work on their debut CD and are about halfway through it. Are currently hustling for some money to finish it.

- **CREAKS IN THE INFLAMMABLE STAIRS** are **Gareth Ashmore** (*b, v*), **David Komadina** (*g*), **Sefton Payze** (*g, v*) and **Terri Celowser** (*d, v*). Began in early '94 but didn't finally solidify until April. "*Music to chase animals to*" — Gareth. Smooth and grungy.

- **DARKAN** are **Jordan Robbins** (*b, v*), **Vass Kapsanis** (*g*) and **Patrick Spicer** (*d*). Have been together with this lineup since mid '93 and have so far released a cassingle, *Blood Music Voll*. Are currently looking to record a mini CD with a view to relocating to Melbourne sometime after its release.
- **DAYZSA** are **Ben Johns** (*g, v*), **Mark Hutton** (*g*), **Steve Bride** (*b, v*) and **Brad Clearly** (*d*). Began in January this year and have begun to pick up occasional gigs along the way, the first show being in March with Kitty Magic (who Steve drums for). Steve described them as sounding sort of Smashing Pumpkins-ish.
- **EFFIGY** began in August '93 as a trio of **Jason Stacy** (*d*), **Annie Beckerling** (*b*) and **Peter Hardman** (*g, v*) before briefly adding Annie's brother **Max** on guitar in January. By ????? they were back to a trio again and are slowly picking up gigs when they can. Started off sounding rather Pixies-ish, but have since moved on from there. About time for a cassette, methinks.
- Although the **FEENDS'** mini-CD *Freakscene* has been out for a while now, they haven't been gigging much to plug it. Have already recorded new material for a four-song vinyl EP on Spinning Top Records. Should have another song on a proposed four band/four songs vinyl EP, again through Spinning Top. In addition, they may well have a mini-CD release through a European label at some stage.
- The **FLANDERS** are **Mark Pike** (*g, b, v*), **Luke Bostleman** (*b, g, v*) and **Christian Owen** (*d*), with Mark and Christian having previously playing in **RUSTY'S FISH TANK**. They began in February. Were described by somebody else as sounding like the Rainyard with a decent drummer; I'd just qualify it a bit by saying it's more like early guitar pop Rainyard, before they lost their way. The Flanders have the same sort of appeal.
- **FLASHING TABLET** are **Richard Sewell** (*g, v*), **Brad Roberts** (*b*), **Carl Properjohn** (*g, v*) and **Chris Hann** (*d*). Are only a part time band with Chris and Richard in the Wooden Fische, while Brad and Carl were in Violet Slide. Got together with this line-up in ??? after playing a gig back in December with Alex Stevens from Blue Tile Lounge on drums, and a gig before that as a trio. The band's name gives a fair idea of what to expect. Currently on the hunt for gigs, and there's talk of recording.
- **THE GOOD BAND:** There'd been rumours going around for a couple of months beforehand that they'd reformed, but I for one didn't think they'd manage to get themselves that organised. Then in July, they played what is so far a one-off gig. Those responsible that night were **Stinky Chips Gorman** (*d*), **Lovely Bobby Favourite** (*b, v*), **Maisy Superstar** (*g, v*) and **Bad Matty Matthews** (*v*). They also sold a songbook for the event so you could sing along with them. Despite Stinky Chips moving to Melbourne with the rest of Mustang!, it is quite possible the group will gig again when next he's in town. There's also talk of recording, with a cassette being the likely outcome.
- **HEADER** are **Ian Freeman** (*v*), **Liam Coffey** (*b, v*), **Brad Bolton** (*g*), **David Chadwick** (*g*) and **Dean Willoughby** (*d*). Have just released a cassette, *Rat*, which is only available at their gigs. Recently went into the studio and it looks like a mini-CD will be released at some stage.
- It looks like **HOGFODDER** have split. Since the previous bassist's vices meant he would be unavailable for quite some time, they recruited a new bass player, but then vocalist Alan Hooper decided he'd had enough and quit. He's currently trying to pull something together. No idea what the rest of them are doing, apart from, in one case, time.
- **HUM** are **Geoff Parentich** (*g, v*), **Dave Berry** (*d*) and **Mark Coddington** (*b*). Previous saxophonist **Travis Calley** apparently only found out about his redundancy back in January when by chance he dropped in at a photo shoot to find he hadn't been invited! The remaining trio should have a new tape out sometime soon. Geoff and Mark's 'other' band **THE HUNKPAPAS** seem to be no more; no idea what became of the recordings they were going to release as a CD. Meanwhile Mark continues to play with

**BOTTICELLI'S ANGEL**, and Travis now has more time to concentrate on Yummy Fur and his many other musical interests. Late news suggests Geoff is about to move to the UK, so I guess that'll be it for the band.

- The **JACKALS** played their last gig in July. The group decided to split when vocalist **Paul McCarthy** said he wanted to pursue his studies full-time, though he's indicated he intends to continue as songwriter. At the moment it looks like **Howard Shawcross** (*b*) and **Howie Johnstone** (*d*) will stick together in some sort of funk band, while guitarist **Phil Bradley** is looking to get a new three or four piece band happening with a rather heavier approach than the Jackals had.

- **KITTY MAGIC** are **Danny Ruggero** (*g, v*), **Steve Bride** (*d*) and **Josh Buckeridge** (*b*). The name's been around longer than the band has. Danny was formerly in the **BLACK ORCHIDS**, a band that rehearsed for some 15-odd months but played two gigs. It may well have had something to do with the temper tantrums thrown by a couple of those involved. ("*Fuck you!*" "*No, fuck YOU!*" "*You're fired!*" "*You can't fire me 'cause I quit!*" etc., etc.) After that, he contributed a song to the 1993 *Kill Yr Idols* compilation cassette under the Kitty Magic moniker, the 'group' being simply Danny plus his room full of equipment. Following on from that, he set about forming a band. Originally rehearsed as a four piece with **Matt Schmidt** on rhythm guitar and Josh (ex-Fuzzswirl) on bass, before Josh left and Matt moved to bass. Began to gig with this lineup in December '93, before Matt decided to move to Melbourne to "*become Australia's answer to Ted Nugent*" (has since returned), at which point Josh returned to the fold. Have continued to gig erratically, and there's talk of a tape of some sort. Steve finds time to lay in Dayzsa as well.

- **LIQUID ALTAR** are **Jeff Grey** (*v, g*), **Matt Jenkins** (*g*), **Alan Hunter** (*b*) and **Mark Eaton** (*d*). Originally started in November '92 and have been through a number of bassists since then; the above lineup's been together since February '94. The best description I can give is '80s indie-guitar rockers'.

- **LOST** began in September '91 as a trio: **Damian Evans** (*b, v*), **Carl Guy** (*d*) and **Andrew Cousa** (*g*); they played around for some time with this lineup and did some recording for a proposed cassette, which never surfaced. In September '93 they added **Breeani Medbury** (*b, v*) and **Matthew Sullivan** (*g*), which, despite the group's unusual lineup of two bassists and two guitarists, wasn't nearly as heavy as you might expect. Giggled for a little while with this line-up before Matthew took temporary absence of leave, with Geoff and Bill from O! taking it in turns to fill in until he returned in February. They then began to really develop as a band but then, in June, Damian decided to leave. Having already lined up some recording sessions in August, he decided to stay until they were completed. They recorded six songs which they're looking to release on both vinyl and CD early in '95. Damian has left to pursue his love of jazz, though he's currently playing in a cover band to pay the rent; the rest are going to continue as a four-piece. (*Breeani? Are you sure that isn't spelt 'Briony'? — ed.*)

- **MOLASSES** are **Paul Williams** (*d*), **Mia Schoen** (*g, b, k, v*) and **Andrew Britain** (*g, b, v*). Began in June '94, and played their first couple of gigs under the name Jamboree. Play what I'd call a shambolic guitar pop concoction, which as you could guess involves a fair bit of instrument swapping. Have already been lined up to do some recording for a Chapter Music compilation cassette. They've very quickly become flavour of the month in some circles, which is rather unfortunate for the band. Planning a look-see trip to Melbourne around Christmas.

- **MARDI PICASSO** are **Martin Gambie** (*g, v*), **Claudine Lhost** (*v, accordion*), **Graham Hope** (*b*), **Cathi Smith** (*viola, v*) and **Vivienne Langham** (*cello, v*). They began as pretty much a floating ensemble based around Martin, but the above lineup is the regular band, though they have also featured **Martin Moon** (*d*) on occasions when his other activities allow him to play. Are currently recording their third CD in fits and starts, *i.e.* when they've got the money. Despite wanting to play on a semi-regular basis every couple of months or so, as yet they haven't managed it.

- **MUSTANG!** finally left town in early August for Melbourne. As to be expected, there was trauma and intrigue right to the end with yet another change in guitarists: **Jon Campbell** out, **Brooke Kelly** in. I gather from both sides that trouble had been brewing for a couple of months. The band didn't bother to tell Jon he was out, which is not the way to do such things! The band's CD, recorded back when Toby Richardson was a member, still isn't out, but it apparently is on the way, when Survival eventually pull their fingers out. They recorded a further four songs with Jon (two by Hamish and one each from Mike and Jon). What will happen to these recordings, produced by Doug Thomas and apparently very good, is anyone's guess. (*I'd mark 'em not too likely — ed.*) They plan to spend six months in Melbourne and see how it goes.

As to what the former Mustang! guitarists are now doing: well not much. Toby and John Henderson have been talking about getting some thing together, but have so far been too lazy too actually do anything. At the moment Jon isn't doing anything, but has been approached to play in a side band with Myles from Bing and Dan from Blue Tile Lounge.

Which former member of Mustang! said he wanted to get in another band just so he could say his last band wasn't Mustang! ?

- **O!** continue to gig around town on a semi regular basis. There's been no real follow up on the interest expressed by Sydney's Half-a-Cow Records. It looks like they'll be doing some new recording some time soon, and they've lined up to tour over east later in the year. Debut cassette *Scared Of Scary* available, and an otherwise unavailable song on the From The Same Mother *Atomic Turn-On* compilation cassette.

- **PSYCHODRAMA** are **Robin Bugden** (*v, g*), **Laura Scaffidi** (*k, v*), **Tony Aspden** (*b*), **Jasper Silver** (*g*) and **Chris Carlisle** (*d*). Were pulled together late last year by Tony and ???????, and have been gigging occassionally since then. Not as gothy as I was expecting when I eventually saw them. They play a reasonably diverse sort of style, although on the alternative side of things.

- I was going to give some details on the **RACHELS**, but since they haven't been able to get themselves organized to actually gig for quite some time, I decided bugger 'em, though there was talk of them changing their name.

- The **STUMP MITTENS** are **Nathan** (*g, v*), **Emma** (*v*), **Conner** (*b*), **Travis** (*g*) and **Nick** (*d*). Have been going for a while now, though only playing irregularly. Have got a fair bit better over the last six months or so, though, as anyone who saw them back then would tell you, there was only really one way to go.

- **SULK** are **Guy Blackman** (*g, v*), **Vivienne Langham** (*cello*), **Bernard Langham** (*g, violin*) and **Gayle Marshall** occassionally guesting on vocals. Despite some quality songs and having money for recording in spite of an erratic gigging itinerary, they still haven't done any serious recording. Are currently looking to diversify their sound by incorporating other instruments, bass and perhaps keyboards, though without adding members.

- The **SUMMER SUNS** *a.k.a.* **Kim Williams**, although inactive on the live scene for quite some time, have recently done a batch of recordings which will see the light of day as a mini-CD and a series of 7" singles, the latter to be brought out by various labels here and overseas. "The Angel Angeline/Samantha" has already been released on Kim's own House of Wax Records. On that recording he's backed by **DM3**, but on most of the other material he's backed by Joe Algeri (*g, v*), Simon Hensworth (*b*) from **AMMONIA** and Pascal Bartolone (*d*) from DM3. Kim and Joe played an accoustic one-off in March under the name the **LOVE LETTERS**, and despite Kim's well known reluctance for playing live gigs in this town, he's said he'll play some live shows to plug the Summer Suns releases. At the moment the live group looks like being Kim (*g, v*), Joe (*g, v*), Martin Moon (*d*) and an as yet unknown bass player.

- **IAN UNDERWOOD** hasn't done much since the Kryptonics' demise back in mid-'92. Did a couple of



69/Kryptonics reunion gigs with the Hitchcock/Hopkinson/Halley lineup, and pulled together the Tommy Raudonikis Experience, with Myles Durham and Michael Corey, which played some Perth gigs over Xmas '92 and then again in July '93. Still living in Sydney, he finally seems to have got himself organised and has recorded a CD worth of material, using Greg Hitchcock and the old Kryptonics and current Front End Loader rhythm section of Richard Corey and Peter Kostic. What the name of the CD will come out under is uncertain, though it definitely will not be under the Krypto's moniker. Although originally designed as a studio project it looks like there will be some sort of live group, though only Ian and Greg look like definite starters due to the rhythm section's outside commitments. Recent news suggests the likely name is **CHALLENGER 7**. Ian was in town recently doing a support slot for You Am I.

- The current status of **THE UNKNOWN** appears to be under a cloud. The group went on ice in December '93, although in their absence they released the *Bio-Psychiatry Is Worse Than Hitler* cassette. Will Wallace continued to play with the Feends, as well as occasionally gigging solo. In May the group's line-up finally solidified with **Will** (*g, v*), **Mark Wallace** (*d*), **Peter House** (*g, v*), and **Ky McElhiny** (*b*), and things looked set to go, but Mark Wallace suddenly passed away in early June which has obviously put a rather big question mark over everything. Will continues to play solo, so hopefully the new material he's been writing will get recorded and released at some stage.

- **WOODEN FISCHER** are **Chris Hann** (*v, g*), **Richard Sewell** (*g, v*), **David O'Halloran** (*b*) and **Flick Dear** (*d*). Have been playing with this lineup since March '93, and have just released their second cassette with this line-up. Are currently trying to sell themselves to get as many gigs as possible so they can finance a CD for release probably early next year. Continuing to get sniffs from eastern states record labels.

- Having released their *Snug But* vinyl EP (only a hundred pressed!), **WORM FARM** then decided to stop gigging when bassist Gav moved to Melbourne to study. The proposed cassette with the EP material plus another song failed to eventuate, so it looks like if you didn't get the EP you've missed out. They've already recorded another half-a-dozen songs and are considering a CD release of some sort. By the time of their last gig in July they were pulling a fair size crowd, and you can expect some more gigs towards the end of the year. While the Sassy One lives the high life over east, the rest of them are getting a country band together, with Cameron moving to bass. No idea what name they'll be playing under, but expect some live action soon.

- **YUMMY FUR** have just finished recording their second CD, to be called *Initiations*, again through Salmonberry Records. At the moment it stands at five songs plus two or three remixed pieces. Current running time is 48 minutes, so yes, they are long songs. Expect an eastern tour once it's released. Depending on how the new CD and tour go, they're thinking of moving to Melbourne later in the year.

**Ross C.**

(Hey, Ross — what about Craig Hallsworth's new band? Zzyzyzyzyzy or whatever? — ed.)

# Reichardt

## *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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*Interviewed by Number Six at a safe cyber-location north of Northbridge a certain length of time ago.*

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**2:** *(looking at tape recorder and microphone)* “Looks like a special effect from *Blake’s 7*, doesn’t it?”

**At least that’s better than a special effect from *Doctor Who*.**

**R:** “‘Look! It’s the concrete wall!’ Yes. The subject being ...”

**Interesting things. Pranks! Fun things to do ...**

**2:** “Civil disobedience. And not so civil.”

**R:** “Uncivil disobedience.”

**Obnoxious disobedience. Why do you do it?**

**2:** “Speaking of cops ... whatever happened to the statue of Justice?”

**R:** “They’ve moved it!” *(laughs)*

**2:** “Why?”

**R:** “Well, I don’t know ... someone apparently tried to turn it into an object of ridicule.”

**2:** “Ridicule justice? Tch tch.”

**R:** “It just seemed an obvious target; it was accessible and in a position to be made ridicule of. It was outside the East Perth lockup.”

**The home of the Close-Mouthed Seventeen — sounds an excellent place for a statue of Justice.** *(The seventeen officers who refused to give evidence on the death of a youth in custody on the grounds that they might incriminate themselves, poor dears.)*

**R:** “It was basically a very large statue that, one night, got turned into a pseudo-image of Adolf Hitler — stick-on moustache and armbands. The statue is now at the front entrance to the place. It used to be right around the side, where people could see it. And climb up onto the pedestal and ... admire the imagery of Justice.

“The same evening, a large number of police vehicles had swastikas stuck on the back of them. What is peculiar is that they didn’t remove them for a long time! I secretly think they preferred them there ... they may have felt more comfortable.”

**2:** “It would have been interesting ... I wonder how many people actually noticed them? Like, pulled up at traffic lights, seen the cop car in front of them and then noticed the discreet little swastika on the bumper? How long did it take them to find out that their squad cars were going around with swastikas on the back?”

**R:** “It took a good couple of weeks before I actually started to see them being peeled off. They were made

from guttering tape. You put the swastikas on using a stencil and either a spirit pen or spray paint. Most Bunnings stores have the guttering tape. It's aluminium backed with adhesive tar. You can't really get it off unless you take a lot of the paint off as well. So large rusty patches on police vehicles also appeared after several months.

"You have to pick a nice big car park full of police cars, such as the central police station. They park out the front ... Used to park out the front."

2: "I've got something interesting here. It's made by Mitsubishi Pencil Company of Japan. It's a Uni-Prockey Pen. And Uni-Prockey Pens are really good. It says here that they write on paper, metal, glass, plastic, stone, styrene, etcetera. In fact, you can write on any surface whatsoever — glass, the tiles in toilets that no-one can write graffiti on — and they cost a few dollars. When they first came out, the Victorian government actually tried to make it illegal for them to be sold to anyone under the age of eighteen. It's water-based, non-toxic and quite hard to get off surfaces, so in the wrong hands it could be very annoying. But there are all sorts of law-abiding uses for it."

R: "You could re-colour the bloodstains in the police cells. What you can do is get hold of a surveyor's laser. It isn't very powerful, but, at about half a kilometre, the beam is about the width of a tennis ball. What's interesting is that if you play it onto the front of a car, it looks almost three-dimensional; so you can really confuse people by having red, glowing tennis balls bouncing on the fronts of their cars when they're driving."

2: "If you did it to a police car, they'd probably think it was a laser designator on a sniper's rifle. Definitely make their day interesting."

### **Do you know any good tricks with superglue?**

R: "Ye-e-ss ... a bit passé. Just the usual boring ones. I prefer dogshit. Dogshit's *much* better. Dogshit underneath the handles of a car, that's a favourite of mine. Mercedes drivers. I went through a stage of not liking Mercedes."

"I did a trick to a woman at work whose husband's an executive for Bunnings — put a '*Preserve Native Forests*' sticker on his car. It was a company car, which hopefully improved their public relations a touch. He was apparently told to remove it. Don't know why."

"The sticker has to be applicable to the person. Putting it on [*greenie*]'s Kombi would be pretty superfluous. It's got to be *directed*."

2: "I think a prank has to have a good sense of humour behind it. The best pranks are ones that are actually making people *think* about something. They have to be educational."

**'Pranks' that go *down* the hierarchy, from the powerful onto the relatively powerless, are pointless and barely deserving of the name 'prank'. It's the ones that go *upwards* that are worthwhile and fun. The statue of Justice, for example.**

R: "Time bombs are good, too. If you put a ham sandwich into a container that's supposed to be opened and put it somewhere it won't be opened for a long time, after six months it turns liquid. You leave these in various places ... If you have a dumbwaiter, as a lot of government departments still do, you put them in and address them to the registrar or the head of department. That works well."

2: "Abbie Hoffman talks about renting a safe deposit box from a bank, putting half a kilo of fish in it ... and never going back, except to pay the rental."

**A friend of Jello Biafra's posted him an eel from Germany. Just shoved it into an envelope and posted it ...**

**R:** “There is actually a department within Australia Post where things that are not correctly addressed end up. They then open them and try to locate the owner, and if they can’t then the item ends up in this huge warehouse for auctioning at a later date. And I met someone there ... they have bizarre things. Every Friday, the go down to the pub, get pissed and have dildo races — charge ’em up, put ’em down the hallway ... *Choice* could publish a comparative test of thirty dildoes on their racing ability.”

**2:** “They used to get jars of marijuana and all sorts, didn’t they? But they weren’t allowed to notify the police because, legally, they’re not allowed to open the mail unless a sniffer dog sniffs it out.”

**Or if it’s from overseas; Customs can open *anything*. So when did you discover that ham sandwiches go into liquid form after six months?**

**R:** “Oh, trial and error.”

**2:** “Sounds like one of those primary school things to me.”

**R:** “Leave it in the bag ... I’ve just always done obnoxious things. I used to get a ball of string and tie it around chairs and things, so you couldn’t get around the house. Glue in my sister’s hair. Anything, really. I’ve never done the drawing-pin-on-the-chair; that’s really just boring.”

**2:** “Tell us pranks involving telephones. I find telephones really are a fine toy.”

**If you get on a telephone and say the right words, you can talk to *anyone, anywhere ... any position*.**

**2:** “I love answering machines. I used to work in an office where I had to phone people up all the time, and I loved leaving messages. The company did a lot of marketing, so we were constantly phoning other companies and a lot of them had answering machines. I *hate* the way people get machines and have a message going, (*flat Dalek voice*) ‘*Hel-lo-you-have-reached-la-la-la ...*’

“I picked up a guy the other day — and this is a prank in itself — and the voice said, ‘*HELLO?*’ and there was really loud music in the background and party sounds, and I said, ‘*Hello?*’ and he said, ‘*HELLO?*’ and I said, ‘*Hel-LO,*’ and he said, ‘*HELLO? Look, I can’t hear you, I’ll turn the music down, hang on a minute ...*’ and I heard the phone go down, I heard him walk across the room and turn the music down, heard him come back across the room and heard him say, ‘*If you care to leave a message, please do so at the tone.*’ (*beep*) ... it was very convincing.”

**I’ve heard a Sunday morning one: someone snoring for thirty seconds, then a beep.**

**2:** “Everyone knows what to do anyway, so you don’t need all that other stuff.”

“I used to leave messages on other machines where, for instance, I would talk in another language. Not that I know any, but I can make one up on the spot — I’m quite fluent in Jyberish. Inventing an *accent* on the spot is the trick. Or I would say, (*pissed-off tone*) ‘*3-4-1-5, could you please call that number immediately, it is very important, thank you.*’ Then hang up. Drive ’em crazy.”

**R:** “Though it’s probably not very nice, I like the one where you break into someone’s house and phone the speaking clock in Turkey and leave the phone off the hook.”

**2:** “That is good if done to someone who deserves it. You wouldn’t do it purely for the hell of it. If you could do it to some deserving corporation at a time when they would be closed for the next several hours, that’d be fantastic.”

“I had a particularly obnoxious neighbour in St. Kilda who was a fascist. He was a very strange man. He had posters outside his house which didn’t actually make any sense — they said things like ‘*1 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 1 + Computer + 1 + 0 + 1 + Jew + 1 + 0 + 1 + ...*’ He had a South African accent and had lots of

young skinheads coming around to his house all the time. I don't know what this man did for a living, he was always in his house. Invalid pension, maybe. I didn't care.

“He approached me because I've got very short hair, so he obviously thought I must be okay, and I told him to fuck off. I then decided that I didn't really like having this house near where I lived; it was so ... offensive to me — the actual look of it, what was going on in there, the whole thing ...”

**R:** “Yes, but not everyone has tactical nuclear weaponry.”

**2:** “I didn't want to blow things up or anything ... His car had stuff like that, too. It was some old car, but it had stickers all over it — National Front, little things about Jews — just stuff I found very offensive. I was walking along one day eating ice cream and, as I passed his car, I weighed up the pleasure of the ice cream against the pleasure of doing something annoying to this offensive arsehole, and I decided to make a big ice cream swastika on his windscreen. And a few days later, my housemate and I went out and let down his tyres.

“But what we eventually did was what I think was the best one, which was the superglue in the door locks — completely fill the door locks with superglue, *then* superglue five-cent pieces over the keyholes. What I would imagine is that he'd try to put his key in the keyhole, think, ‘*oh, I've got to get this bit of metal off,*’ spend ages getting that off, think, ‘*phew, I've finally got the lock free,*’ then discover the lock's jammed anyway. A good double-whammy is always nice.”

### **How about a potato up the exhaust pipe?**

**2:** “If you stuff it *well* up the exhaust pipe, it can't actually be gotten out without a great deal of trouble. The car *will not* start, and the best mechanic in the world won't know what's wrong unless they know about potatoes and exhaust pipes.”

### **Tell us more about the nature of pranks.**

**R:** “I don't really have to see what happens; I'm content in the knowledge that something *will* happen. I think the problem with some people is that they set something all up, do it, then sit around like a dickhead waiting for it to happen. I mean — a quiet street, a car that's been heavily altered, you're the only person there, looking at this car ...”

**2:** “A lot of people get into pretty much random acts of vandalism and destruction which, with a little forethought, be very pointed and motivated; they could actually say something. If you're going to spray-paint on a wall, why not spray on the wall of an offensive business and spray something offensive to that business? Why not make a statement? I mean, spraying your *name* on someone's wall ... big fuckin' deal.”

**R:** “Outside most butchers', they have pictures of happy little cows and happy little sheep! Can you believe it?”

**2:** “Put ‘*cut along dotted line*’ on them.”

**R:** “Or blood squirting out of it, that'd be enough — just bring the image they're using back to some sort of reality.”

### **Happy little cartoon of cows and lambs outside a butcher's is *really weird*. It's like Social Security posters with a smiling dole queue. Have you ever seen a smiling dole queue?**

**2:** “The only time I've seen people in a dole queue smile was in St. Kilda, when they had an armed guard there — one guy went berserk, and the armed guard ran away and locked himself in the manager's office! Left all the poor DSS employees out there ...”

**R:** “The nature of the prank ... It’s a bit like art — it’s something you *have to do*, it’s not something you really have to think about. It preferably shouldn’t be something actually *hazardous*; the object should be to ridicule, rather than harm. It should really just be intended to produce disquiet. If it makes people think or feel uncomfortable, it’s good; if it actually physically injures them, it’s not.”

**2:** “I think property damage can be okay if it happens to people who can afford it and who do deserve it. But people shouldn’t be hurt physically ... or even too severely emotionally. But it’s okay to shock them occasionally.

“About a year ago, I saw a performance art group in town who were all dressed in perfectly normal business suits and carrying cellular phones and briefcases, but there were about thirty or forty of them all walking together in a pack and talking into their phones at the same time. And that’s just taking something everyday and accepted and viewing it from a different angle. And it does confront people a bit, but it doesn’t hurt anyone; it just makes them think.”

**R:** “Thought ... *thinking* is a terrorist weapon that’s not really utilised. It’s true — if you get a section of the populace and actually get them to *think* about something, it has a much greater effect than getting them scared shitless of catching buses does. Graffiti of some form is actually a terrorist weapon in that it does create thought.”

**M:** “I saw these adverts on all Queensland trains that had a picture of an aerosol can in a dark, empty street, and it said, ‘*If you ever see one of these, or someone using one of these, contact us immediately and you may receive a reward up to*’ such-and-such an amount. It was really fascist. They had a notice up saying all the different fines in the trains. It was so amazing.”

**2:** “Yeah, when we were in Melbourne we worked out that if you were standing on a seat, eating, drinking alcohol, spray-painting graffiti and using abusive language all at the same time, they could put you in jail for several years or fine you something like twenty thousand dollars.”

**R:** “In fact, they’re just waiting for someone to do just that!”

**2:** “In 1991, there was a group of local celebrities who were going to be sleeping out in a carpark. Did you hear about that? ‘*To raise money for homeless youths ...*’”

**... and the homeless youths set fire to the sleeping bags, because they thought this was bullshit!**

**2:** “And what’s interesting is that the media presented that whole incident as if it were an act of senseless violence — ‘*the very people we were trying to help have destroyed any chance of it ever happening!*’ — how tragic! — whereas I think it was a very well-thought-out political action; they were saying, ‘*don’t patronise us, don’t come out here with your thermos of coffee and a full belly and spend one night sitting round with all your chums and think that you could possibly understand what it’s like to be in my shoes!*’ But what’s interesting is that the media presented it as being such a pointless act of vandalism.”

**They didn’t present it very much at all, because people did realise why it had been done. It’s so obvious when you read that it was a bunch of *homeless youths* who set fire to the sleeping bags.**

**2:** “One interesting piece of information with that was the reason they couldn’t apprehend the two people that did it: they actually saw them doing it on the surveillance camera, but, legally, they’re not allowed to record off those cameras when there’s any sort of rally or gathering in Forrest Place, because that could be used to identify people of a given political affiliation. So if there’s anything organised going on, it could provide good cover ...”

**Tell me how you met your wife.**

**R:** “Oh, that’s not really that unusual; I just used to like taking things to pieces. I was working in the state

Public Service. The photocopier wasn't working, and so I thought (*lightbulb going on above head*), 'It's broken!' I was a very good public servant — most people would have just sat there for the rest of the day — so I took the lid off, then I took the front off, then I found there were bits inside it, and I wondered what they were, so I took all the bits from the inside out and it *still* didn't work — and by this time there was actually quite a crowd, it was turning into a bit of a spectator sport — I think they were amused by the fact that someone was working — and all the bits were out, so, obviously, it was the bits that should go back in; so I put all the bits back in, put the lid back on and put an 'OUT OF ORDER' sign on it."

2: "Not exactly in the same order you took them out."

R: "Well, I put them back *in* ... I mean, they were inside the bounds of the machine, it should work ..."

2: "Did it all fall on the floor when the technician opened it up?"

R: "It did, actually. And do you know what the technician said? He said, '*It doesn't work!*'"

2: "To dismantle the entire machine then put the bits back inside and seal it up would really make that technician's day. Possibly his whole week."

R: "The thing with government departments is that they run with very tight parameters; they have watchdog systems, methods of putting information through the various procedures with lots of checks and counter-checks for internal validity. Most documents have to be signed and in a certain fashion to become legally binding; if they're *not* signed, or if they're signed and then added to, they cease to be legally binding. So it's quite possible to penalise people by getting access to the documents and signing under their signature, '*Donald Duck*'. All you've done is write '*Donald Duck*' underneath their name, but it actually makes the document no longer legal, because it contradicts the security file. Most documents are filmed, and, when any major government transaction goes through, they usually take the original as well, to be the certification. If the original has been altered, then the security copy isn't valid and they have to go through all the paperwork on that document again and re-present it; and if it's a major deal going through, this could take an extra couple of weeks. So you can essentially slow down a lot of business."

M: "Would this apply to police statements as well?"

R: "Definitely. Essentially, what you do is to sign anything — you put anything! — above where the signature is. '*It's a fair cop, guv'nor*.' It's not a legal document any more, in that it doesn't represent what they believe it is; it's been tampered with. Just go to where the original documents are and put something on them."

**I did this when they were finally kicking me out of the Commonwealth Public Service. The section manager kept bringing me these things to sign that were half truth and half lies, so I'd say, 'OK, I'll sign it.' 'You'll sign it?' 'I'll sign it.' I just didn't use my signature. I was just waiting for a document to be brought up as some sort of evidence ... they got rid of me first, but I did lay some groundwork.**

M: "So you could go into Social Security and ask for your file and crumple up a page ..."

**No, because they have someone in the room with you if you inspect it personally.**

2: "How much does it cost you to look at your own file?"

**Nothing. If Social Security is really shitting you, what you do is to request a photocopy of your file. You don't need to give a reason. What happens then is that the file goes to central office, which means it's out of the normal office and they can't use it; and if they slow down your benefit in any way, you just call up and *politely* give 'em hell twice a day — just be a polite but bloody persistent thorn in their side.**

**2:** “If you’re working in a major corporation or a government department, what you’re talking about is pranks that hit people right up the top. One thing to do is to get a piece of stationery from that department, type out a false circular and address it to all the heads of department, arranging a meeting for them all at a certain time and place; they’ll all turn up and none of them will know why the meeting’s on or who arranged it.”

**Government departments are a bit harder on the phone, but the rule still applies: you can talk your way through by keeping perfect posture and demanding continuously. “None of your business! I want to talk to your boss! What level are you?”**

**2:** “Yeah. I’ve always found that if someone in a government department is really, really pissing you off, one of the best things you can do is ask to speak to their supervisor.”

**And then talk like the voice of sweet reason.**

**2:** “The other thing that works is being really polite. That tricks ’em.”

**Tell us more about your career in the state Public Service.**

**R:** “Well, it wasn’t a career in the Public Service ...”

**2:** “... it was careering through the Public Service!”

**R:** “There’s no such thing as the Public Service — there are people, then there’s a point at which they suddenly become public servants. And it happens to some people quickly, to some people before they’ve joined and to other people over a long period of time — they could be there for eight years, they’re nice, decent human beings, then one day they’re suddenly *public servants*. I could feel this sucking vacuum and could feel myself falling into this vortex of public-servantdom; like an out-of-body experience, except you’re going down the S-bend of a toilet.

“I used to wear peculiar clothing in those days — paramilitary, makeup ... actually, I should have camouflaged myself and put rubber stamps on my head — *‘I’m a form! I’m a form!’*” It was mainly black with things stencilled onto it, like nuclear bombs dropping. I used to wear eyeliner as well.”

**2:** “Did you have to deal with the public in your job?”

**R:** “Oh, yes, I was on the front counter.”

**What levels did you start and finish at?**

**R:** “They were the same, yes. I began at the bottom, worked my way up to the bottom and left from the bottom ... that’s an appropriate description of the Public Service, isn’t it? I usually worked with the public, and I actually like working with the public; and I think the reason I didn’t get kicked out was that people basically liked me — I was actually helpful to people. Not wankers, I used to ignore them and let someone else deal with them. Instead of going sequentially by their number in line, you rewarded nice people for being nice and penalised wankers.

“Basically, I’d get people what they wanted, get it quicker than anybody else and not charge them, which usually endears you to people. The Public Service expects you to be impartial, which is strange, since they’re not ... I actually used to give money *back* to people. That was fun.”

**2:** “The Robin Hood of the Public Service!”

**R:** “They actually give you vouchers because, of course, we’re not capable of holding money — money’s important and we’re not — so people would spend real money and get vouchers, which they then gave to us to do things for them; I’d do the thing and give it to them with a pile of vouchers, which they could go



and get a refund on.

“This was just because they were nice people. The money for all of the nice people came from the wankers.

“Eventually, they tried to get rid of me. They have interesting ways of trying to get rid of people. They virtually *never* sack someone, as the procedures for doing so are too complex for even the Public Service to understand; so what they do is suspend you. This means you don't receive any pay, so after a month or so you have no money and have to resign.”

**M:** “You could live off the vouchers.”

**R:** “No, no, that would be unethical. They're for the *nice people*.”

“I had a doctor who was prescribing me lots of very nice pills. I was working on the idea of convincing him I had work-related stress. That would get me worker's comp for about a year or so, then go on an extended pension. But things started happening too quickly before that; I started getting silly ... putting food colouring in people's tea, cutting up people's umbrellas ... then they suspended me.

“Then I went back to my doctor. He was half-convinced that this was valid, and I turned it around and said it was his fault that I had behaved in such an irrational manner because he had said that I should act more naturally. He felt terribly guilty. See, doctors are great, because they really believe they're important and have this professional ethic. I went to the doctor and said, *'Look what I've done! Look what you've done to me!'* and he said, *'oh, you poor thing,'* and wrote me a script which basically said that I was temporarily insane at the time of committing the offense and they should pay me eight weeks' compensation. And when I came back, they were all very nice to me and I could do anything ...”

**And you went, 'GO FOR IT!'**

**R:** “No, the challenge was off. I just used to leave the office all the time and no-one would really care.”

**2:** “I'd think they'd be quite relieved, actually.”

**R:** “I'd work a two- or three-day week. At full pay, of course. I'd come along in the morning, sign on and go home. That worked pretty well. Go to a movie. If anyone ever asked, I'd say, *'oh, look, I was feeling really stressed out, I just had to get out ...'* Only a couple ever did.”

**You were in that great big creaky building, weren't you?**

**R:** “That's right. It's like a skateboard park with steps instead of ramps.”

**2:** “And typewriter keyboards.”

**R:** “And keyboards. One of the best pranks wasn't meant as a prank. They installed a wonderful whizz-bang you-beaut computer system which cost mega-dollars, then got an ordinary electrician to wire it up. The ordinary electrician looked at this piece of cabling, saw two wires coming out, thought, *'oh, this must be the plug,'* wired it up, plugged it in ... and, of course, it was low-voltage coaxial interface cabling and he fried all the chips.

“The challenge left; I decided that I could either remain there and become a public servant with a *'colourful past ...'*”

**Urgh.**

**R:** “Yep. Or I could leave. So I left. And other people who'd left a couple of weeks earlier had had big parties for their leaving ... I had absolute silence! In fact, my manager said, *'oh, when you go to lunch, you*

*don't really have to come back ...* I think they were worried I might leave a parting message for them.

“Before I left, I went to the computer room, went to the main junction box and took out all the terminal cables and rerouted them to other terminal cables. Everyone at one counter is doing one job, so the terminal is set up for that job; so they all had to move around, and it really, *really* upset them.

“After that, I was on unemployment benefits for a *long* time. That was fun, yes.”

**You don't have a lot of money to live on, but you sure do have a lot of time to plot things.**

**R:** “Unemployment benefits were quite good then, because there were a lot of government departments also giving little handouts for various bits and pieces. Community Welfare used to give cash, so you'd work it that all your bills arrived within a certain period, go there with your telephone and electricity, say, *'look, this comes to more than my dole money, what the hell do I live on?'* and they'd give you an eighty-five-dollar cash cheque.”

**2:** “Nowadays, you'd get a food voucher if you're lucky.

“I've just remembered one that happened a few years ago, during the America's Cup. Someone went down the Fremantle railway line and took every sign that identified the railway stations and swapped them around. There were thousands of tourists travelling along that railway line every day and none of them had a clue where they were. And such a simple idea doesn't actually hurt anybody, but it really screws things around a bit. You couldn't pull the same prank now because the trains talk to you and tell you what station you're at; but imagine you were in a job where you had access to the tapes or chips or whatever they are ...”

**2:** “*“Ohmigawd, we're gonna crash! Aaargh!”*”

**R:** “I actually know how to drive a shunting train — one of my many skills. They're quite fun and very simple. You don't actually rev them up — they're set to go at a certain speed and you take the brake off to let them run. The long country rides are nice.

“I quite like what the farmers did during that little strike thingy. That was good, because it was using aspects of the law to minimise effects against yourself. They took a few trucks down the freeway, turned off the ignition, locked the steering wheels and threw away the keys; what they in fact did was to shut down the freeway and most of the city centre, but all they were guilty of was obstructing the traffic, which carries a twenty-five-dollar fine.”

**2:** “It's dangerous if there's someone sick out there; it's probably more effective as a terrorist action. It's like pouring concrete into railway switches — it tends to stop things suddenly. In doing anything like that, it's important to phone up first — you actually don't want people finding out the hard way.”

# Reviews

## *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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### Cyberindie

I've been a sucker of late for any printed work that has the "cyber-" prefix on the cover. I actually do have technical knowledge, so can tell when someone's trying it on. And I spent large chunks of 1988 attached to the Internet, which was a number of years before you had bloody fashion magazines running articles on how cool it was.

The noise-to-signal ratio on the Internet is worse than the worst zine rack you ever saw — the Usenet generates two or three thousand pages of text a day. Imagine a record shop zine rack where all the zine's covers looked much the same (once you *found* the zine rack), but nineteen out of twenty turned out to be *Mailman* or *Spunk*.

The only problem with computers is that, despite now being an impossible-to-remove part of the fabric of society and culture, they're still just too fuckin' hard to use. (Imagine early cars where the driver had to hand-control everything down to the spark timing and where you had to go through a five-minute procedure before even starting up; imagine *everyone* having to rely on a completely unreliable shit-heap of a car like the one you drive now.) But as interpersonal communication tools — the international phone network goes everywhere; government-proof encryption is widely available and you can send *anything* down a phone line — worldwide computer networking is going to be one of the finest things ever to happen for us. (Whether the 'us' is actually everyone or just the sort of relatively privileged members of the middle classes who read PF is another matter.)

Oh, by the way — CYBERPUNK: Socially stillborn zit-encrusted nerd who thinks that wearing a backwards baseball cap, reading *Mondo 2000* and listening to techno-industrial-lite and Nirvana instead of Alan Parsons and Pink Floyd will get him laid. He's wrong.

(No listenable 'industrial' music in 1994 should have a beat. *Metal Machine Music* is a suitable rôle model here.)

**MARK DERY (ed): Flame Wars: The Discourse Of Cyberculture** (*South Atlantic Quarterly*)

Yep, a good one.

**MICHAEL BENEDIKT: Cyberspace: First Steps**

Another good one. Particular points to Allucquere Rosanne (Sandy) Stone for pointing out the problems involved in letting adolescent males define your civilisation.

Not too keen on the chapter about the Virtual Reality workplace. The hypothetical worker they've chosen is, of course, not a typing-pool battery chook or data-entry robotnik or job-hating wage slave in general, but (heh!) a highly-paid computer programmer. You can't tell me that a *computer programmer* is going to be a *typical* cyberspace worker if all this comes to pass. What I *really* wanna know is the lot of the cyber-shitworker. That's you and me in ten or twenty years. Non-technicians don't seem to exist in this conception.

**BOING BOING:** The finest cyberzine I've seen: intelligence, wit, humour, perspective, *really cool technical shit*, a *life*. This is a genuine-article *zine* — hell, *the* genuine-article *zine* — and whips *Mondo 2000*'s consumerist butt: more text than pictures, more content than fashion shoots (?!), no pretensions (up its arse). Essential. They also hardly talk about music.

**MONDO 2000:** I had severe misgivings about this one until I saw *Wired*. Oh, boy. Pretty bloody consumerist and Californian and suffers recurrent techno-sexism (technologically-advanced sexism being, of course, much hipper than and not in the least bit like that old-fashioned primitive sexism), but fundamentally of substance and worth your time. They do talk about lame-ass 'alternative' music (Red Hot Chili Peppers?!) just as if it *means* something, which is a problem.

**WIRED:** First issue read like something written to a brief found in a lesser corporate marketing guy's in-tray on a Tuesday afternoon (see *Axcess*) — hideous cybercorporate mag — though subsequent issues have usually had substance. Corporate + Sincere = Yuppie.

Still don't know why it has CD reviews. (I have a horrible feeling the music reviewed may actually be just the ticket for the intended readership.) The review section does earn one tenth of a point for *Microwave Of The Month* — the conductive surface makes CDs even more fun to microwave than records.

Most of the staff of *boING-boING* now have day jobs at *Wired*, which justifies its existence to a certain degree.

**AXCESS:** The Pearl Jam of cyberzines. Actually, I'm not feeling that generous. A marketing shithead's idea of a twenty-something *zine*. Given to computer design vomit (the un festive and out-of-season Christmas tree approach to font selection) and transparent 'gee, wow!' lack of criticality to blatant hype. (Criticality only puts the advertisers off.) Dumb enough that a few interesting things slipped through the editorial net, but fundamentally a piece of shit. I ignored obvious warning signs and paid money for it. Be sure to feel pissed off every time you see a copy. I do.

**24-SEVEN:** Like *Axcess* but worse and English. Whereas *Axcess* tries to link 'grunge' with the cyberculture, *24-Seven*'s preferred music is techno, it has even less technical content and is actually dumber. (The bad Swedish disco pop of cyberzines.) Luckily I spotted the symptoms early and avoided actually buying it.

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## Books

Most rock books are utter and irredeemable rubbish; some are average (the best of the worst or the worst of the best); a *very* few are actually pretty good to great.

What ones are any good? The Lester Bangs one was great in terms of opinionation, even if everything it said about *Metal Machine Music* was goddamned lies. (It is actually a musical record ... certainly as musical as any trendy Japanese noise specialist.) The Radio Birdman one is excellent and recommended, and has the lyrics in a separate section to the main text! (If only ... that Hendrix one.) A lot of rock books have a decent go at it, but end up only making the correct approach apparent; *e.g.* *Paintwork*, on the Fall,

which was actually a reasonable cobbled history, but showed clearly that the real book on the Fall will be the complete lyrics and nothing less; and the history is interesting in passing, but isn't really important — the Fall not being glamourpusses, the work itself is actually the focus.

Joe Carducci, *Rock And The Pop Narcotic* is an excellent, important and highly recommended book that is comprehensively full of shit in many places. Overground rock'n'roll in America wiped out not by capitalist leeches, but *in horrifying fact* by a conspiracy of limey fag wave Tin Pan Alley haircut bands and hippie liberal rock critics? Amazing book, though. Get it.

Press-clipping collections are pretty good in that, instead of a redigestion, you get the original sources in all their contradiction and can allow for time, place, the original cretinous journalist, etcetera. Alas, copyright forbids their wider circulation.

Books of historical data (*e.g.* Chris Spencer's) are as good as their subject — given care and attention to detail — and the facts, being historically fixed, can be finalised over a number of editions; you don't have to get *everything* in one burst. (Though you'd better get 99.8% or else.) But these are a different species to the band-specific books.

Possibly the best format for a band-specific book would be some sort of computerised hypertextual creature combining the standard cobbled historical rehash with full text of original research and clippings, doubts and contradictions being noted and full referencing linking the two sections. This format fits in very well with the Doctrine of Total Information (there is no such thing as forbidden knowledge), which we at PF hold dear. An issue of *Party Fears* along these lines would presumably consist of both edited, annotated transcripts (what you see now) and original interview recordings (so you can hear how much I actually crap on in interviews). Record 'reviews' will be the actual sound recording (no more groping for poxy descriptions of fundamentally intangible musical associations! It's all there in front of you!) plus historical notes (this requiring a much greater rigour in historical reference on our part, but that should be a lot easier if we assume the sort of advanced information environment all this would require). Book reviews will be the full text plus notes on good bits. Live reviews will remain unchanged; venues don't fit into hypertext systems, after all. Opinion pieces such as this will spew forth as usual. Letters worth printing will continue to arrive once in a blue moon.

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## Current listens

Oh boy it's fun having a ten-disc CD player. It actually says "*CD Changer*" rather than "*CD Player*" on the front panel. And all those buttons! The Sony CDP-C10 — what an impressive-looking technological monolith. Now all I need is the manual.

- **JOHNNY CASH:** *American Recordings* CD, 1994 — nyak nyak.
- **DAVE GRANAY WITH THE CORAL SNAKES:** "Warren Oates" (from *You Wanna Be There But You Don't Wanna Travel* CD, 1994) — eclipses everything else on the album.
- **RONALD SHANNON JACKSON:** *Taboo* CD, 1990 — not that God-awesomely great relatively speaking, but fine enough when this sort of thing is what you're in the mood for.
- **MAGIC DIRT:** "Redhead" (from *Signs Of Satanic Youth* CD, 1994)
- **NIRVANA:** *In Utero* LP, 1993; *Unauthorised Live, Vol. 1* CD — so *kill me*. Besides, a minor dead Kurt obsession is as good a hobby as any. Wanna come up to my room and see my clippings collection?
- **SMALL WORLD EXPERIENCE:** "Get Lost" (from *Spill Compilation Two* comp CD, 1993) — Pat Ridgewell is an unsung pop genius.
- **SNOG:** "Cliché" CD single, 1994 — two notes, too many BPM, disposable, fun. Snog's habit of releasing eighty-minute singles is to be applauded.
- **WONDROUS FAIR:** "Poor" (from *Spill Compilation Two* comp CD, 1993) — an almost perfect

pop song and probably the best way to start a comp like *that* one.

- **VARIOUS:** *Fast Product: Rigour Discipline And Disgust* comp CD, 1993 — a slice of a Golden Age I was actually just a little too young for, but fuck it.

### **JOHNNY CASH: American Recordings** (*American Recordings, US CD*)

The thing I've always loved about Johnny Cash is that he can sing any bloody song and make it sound brilliant, because of his voice — but, when other people do *his* songs, they *still* sound brilliant. This new record is just him and guitar, mostly in the studio but with a couple of live tracks. Every song is excellent. Three or four chords is all you need if you know what you're doing. I'm probably becoming a country convert.

Not available outside the US due to American's legal wranglings with Phonogram over non-US distribution rights, particularly with regard to the UK but the fallout hitting Australia. Obtain a copy any way you can at whatever expense — this record is class itself.

### **DAGOES: Supreme** (*ind CD*)

Compilation of all sorta tracks and live stuff. Not a complete works — “Heartbeat/Hey Man” is missing, f'r instance (and “Heartbeat” was one of my favourites!) — which is odd given that it has room (sixty minutes total). Comes in a 5” pizza box with the tray glued inside. Cheap, but only five hundred around.

### **HARDHEADS: The Long Goodbye** (*Spear Tackle CDEP*)

If these songs were done acoustic and without the vocal affectations (hard-rock grunts and “*ah-a-a-ahhh*” harmonies), they'd sound like the Robert Forster songs on *Send Me A Lullaby*. And I bet no-one's ever said *that* to them before. As it is, it's a '60s-rocking band edging into hard-rock that nevertheless may have a tape of a Go-Betweens album lurking somewhere in its room. It sounds like it's trying to sound dumber than it is: smart chords in ‘dumb’ songs. “Burn” and “Thanks For Nothing” are just about okay. Not great yet, but I'll hold on to this one *just* in case they come out good. (*PO Box H14, Hurlstone Park 2193*)

### **MAGIC DIRT: Signs Of Satanic Youth** (*Au Go Go 2x7"/CD*)

Having a double-seven release gets this (and the label) a lot of points. They don't radicalise my life — and, truth be told, I wasn't thrilled seeing them live; dull-OK, but Adalita dancing to Verona lost 'em a few points — but it's good pop music with loud guitars and a good sound (one of the better usages of a female voice I've heard on a conventional rock'n'roll record) and the guitars are grungy but not ‘grunge’ in the ‘classic’ sense, which means it's got a future. The Magic Dirt backlash doesn't start here. Best song is “Redhead”, one of my faves this week. There is a thirty-six-minute hidden bonus track on the CD (consisting of one tape loop) that makes the seven-inch a great idea.

### **SNOG: Lies Inc.** (*Id/PolyGram CD*)

I know no-one reading this will want to know about this record, but this is the first full-price new album I've bought in 1994 (the only one in 1993 was Urge Overkill, and that took me until November) and I like

it. Bought this for the singles, which are basically the best things on it. Techno-industrial pop with primary-school Situationist lyrics, *i.e.* industrial ‘lite’. (Any musical form that goes metal is set to die soon after — Ministry heard a Big Black album and a Metallica album and fucked it up for everyone — and going metal and pop at the same time means it’s definitely the day to pull the plug.) Strictly disposable, but fun for a while. I’ve also bought all their singles. CD loses points for having a clear tray with no picture behind.

### **TELLERS: Limited Movement** (*Siren CD*)

Mainstream Qld rock/pop band goes ‘grunge’ and puts “*fuck*” in a song. I’d rather see the Stump Mittens than listen to this again. File next to Hipslingers, Meloncholi-flowers, Ape The Cry, Valiants, Ivy Bridge, Enaergia, Many Faces, Richard Mortimer, Studio 52, fuck there’s a lot of the turds. They’re always the ones who phone you three times to follow up, too. There are much, much worse things than bad *alternative* music out there. Do *you* know any irredeemable suburban non-entities who think they’d like to be musical stars and that reading songwriting and music industry how-to books is the way? Only someone with a terminal case of Wenner’s Syndrome would allow these things space to exist. The sort of ‘indies’ that make a bit more major-label quality control seem like a pretty appealing idea. Fuck these people for wasting even ten minutes of my life.

### **VARIOUS: Fast Product: Rigour Discipline And Disgust** (*Fast Product/EMI, UK CD*)

Fast Product was a Scottish post-punk label running from 1977 till 1980 that, like many Britishers of the time, had a list of artistic theories, ideals and pretensions that were almost more important than the music. Bob Last: “... *an idea about a way of approaching things. We refused to accept that any part of the whole chain of making cultural products lacked significance; the entire chain generated meaning. We embraced this distortion enthusiastically. If it was a record, we recognised that the packaging was not a device to sell the record but was itself something we were selling ...*” Which would be a marketing statement so suspect as to be ludicrous in 1994, but was just the ticket for music in the late seventies. “*Speed was vital here: slipping through the net, you could say what you wanted with a minimum of mediation ...*” Ah, those innocent and confident days.

(As it turned out, this confidence became hubris; and, after the artistic collapse of one of the finest and most productive indie scenes ever seen, British music never recovered its quality. Spare me please: Primal Scream and Blur are Pearl Jam and REM.)

This CD contains everything the label released that wasn’t a compilation (nothing from the three *Earcom* audio-zines — sorry, collectors!) except the Dead Kennedys, plus some Fire Engines stuff from Pop:Aural, Last’s follow-up label. Bands featured are the **Mekons** (first two singles — raw punk with a sense of humour and something to say), **Scars** (raw-recorded pop songs with tunes — heaps better than the crappy 1981 album), the **Human League** (early synth-pop experimentation days — “*allying technology with humanity and humour*” — “The Dignity Of Labour” correctly anticipates, as the sleeve notes point out, ambient house music, not that you or I care), **2.3** (young punk-scene band, not particularly wonderful and not particularly punk), **Gang Of Four** (“Love Like Anthrax”, “Armalite Rifles” and “Damaged Goods” — it’s a fascinating exercise to hear all three songs you knew off by heart [except “At Home He Thinks He’s A Tourist” or whatever its proper title is] as a New-Romantic-by-default in the early eighties actually placed in their proper context) and the **Fire Engines** (“Candy Skin” is always worth having another copy of, particularly on Convenience-Disc).

They had ten thousand theories about why they were making this goddamned fantastic music, but every one of the theories was wrong, because the theories kept going when the music started sucking. The

flipside of modernist revolutions is glass and concrete buildings, the aesthetics of freeways and a sterile environment.

(Actually, we can get into all sorts of stuff here — a cultural phase-change to a complex, vibrant, volatile liquid state under the heat of modernism; the change to gas and dissipation as the heat was kept on for too long ... complexity theory and the precise point at which the bubbling stew is ‘interesting’, rather than too solid or too fluid ... Deleuze and Guattari ... keep all this in mind for later, OK.)

This comp is a great bit of history and entertainment — not just for the music, but for Jon Savage’s sleeve-notes, a detailed history of the label and an excellent slice of the heady days of British post-punk in the late seventies. I’d also like to quote a chunk that I found interesting, having bought the anti-major-label issue of *Maximum Rock’n’Roll* the same day I got this: “*Soon after the release of the first ‘Earcom’, Fast Product sold their catalogue to EMI. This was a controversial move within the emerging ‘independent’ network ... ‘We were against the idea that alternative was radical: it always seemed that the mainstream could happily accommodate any number of alternative ghettos. In fact by setting itself up as an alternative the sector simply gave succour to the establishment’s hollow liberal fantasies.’*”

Or, back to Jon Savage: “*You could say that for all that period’s speed, wit and passion, the drive of the media industries was unstoppable; and you would be right. Or you could be graceful and bathe yourself in the noise.*”

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## Zines

**BLACK TO COMM #19 (96pp quarto):** *BtC* was always one of my favourites in the world of no-holds-barred art-Nazism for HIGH ENERGY ROCK’N’ROLL — a zine for people who understand that, when deciding on how to spend your money, you can only eat a given piece of *food* once whereas you can play a *record* any number of times — but with this issue, Chris Stigliano’s gross homophobia (it’s an official *BtC* stance) and right-wing political opinions have finally made the magazine almost unreadable. He seems to have decided that, since his rock’n’roll sense (still sharp as ever) and his political solutions (there’s an editorial rant seriously praising Dan Quayle on his anti-Murphy Brown stance — you think I’m joking, don’t you?) both exist in the same head, they must therefore be two views of the same thing; and that rock’n’roll is an integral part of his personal comprehensive aesthetic of life and culture, and you must be a *liberal* (US) or a *faggot* or *not lower-class* to disagree.

I would previously have recommended this zine as compulsory reading for all (from school age on), but must now mark it as only suitable for those who already know they’ll like the music — others may be put off so much by Stigliano’s political crap (and that of others like him) that they end up thinking that being a lower-middle-class reactionary, and proud of it! follows naturally from the music, and hence never bother with the sounds.

Stigliano’s (and, for that matter, Carducci’s) view that a certain set of right-wing politics follows naturally from a given excellent musical form is as fallacious as the view that a certain set of left-wing politics follows naturally from a given excellent musical form. (Mediocre musical forms may actually have association to political opinions, since they fail as music anyway.) Art and interpersonal relationships are *different things*. Art is the only consideration in art, but life is more important in life than art is.

*BtC* has always been a bit of a test of the mental filters, but I’m having trouble with this one. Like trying to filter gold-bearing shit. I was *so* excited when I found this in Au Go Go ... The noble lower classes, eh? Love ’em. (714 Shady Avenue, Sharon PA 16146, USA)

**M4:** Where are all these punk/metal zines coming from? Think I’ll have to start rating ’em on the *PF*



*Dead Horse Quotient*<sup>TM</sup>, a measure of word fatigue versus life and freshness. The aim is to score zero. Extreme youth gets some slight concessions, but not many. Dead horse quotient here is pushing 50–60% in detail and 90%+ in overall outlook. The failure mark on this scale is around 30%, unless the rest of the zine in question is *really* good. This isn't. (PO Box 263, Melton 3337)

**PAGAN GRIND #1** (36pp A5): “Punk, Hardcore, Death, Grind, Grunge, as long as the music is honest and interesting I've got time for it.” Bands (Infected, Suiciety), opinion pieces (the horses flogged being a mite smelly, but hey ...), artwork and cartoons, live, recordings. It's fine for what it is ... dead horse quotient around 20–25% ... tho' far as I'm concerned, any punk zine I get now has to measure up to *Underdog Zine*. (Don, 14 Russell Street, Fremantle 6160)

**THE SKILLS OF DEFENSIVE DRIVING #4: The Car Ahead** (26pp A4): A music zine in basis, though they've realised you need more. I'm not keen on their unashamed use of 'post-modernist'. Tumbleweed interview, excellent live reviews (“*Here Carl continues in his never ending search for God knows what. Hope he finds it.*”), some records, a review of Leyland Brothers World (five stars for total insensitive cultural exploitation), a huge pile of stuff on Pacific islands and how to have a holiday on one (excellent again) and a piece on hunting the Ugly Australian. It's charming, witty, intelligent and aware, it scores a *clear zero* on the dead horse scale and, what's more, it's *free*. Dunno how they manage that one, but get one while you can. (\$1.50 post per issue; Ben Richardson, Ben Life Press, PO Box 394, 22 Central Avenue, Manly 2095)

**SPUNK #2** (64pp A4): What a thoroughly objectionably bad piece of shit. Wishes it were *Juice*. Standard mainstream-number-two bands, shallow and consumerist questions. Editorial ends with “*Remember, lo-fi sux.*” You can't tell the editor works in the promotions office of Festival NSW, can you? (Except by how he sent out the promos for the first issue with a Festival 'with compliments' slip.) I'm reliably told that he's the nicest guy ever, but nice guys grow on trees, just like bad zines.

**SPUNK #3** (28pp A4): Imagine if someone convinced Pearl Jam that a 'lo-fi' album would be a useful career move.

**THIRSTY AND MISERABLE #1** (40pp A5): Done by the same guy who did *Detox* a couple of years ago and of the same musical concerns. Bored!, New Killers On The Block, D.O.A. (“*I personally recommend avoiding their output from 85–92*”), Hippy Knight (Cousin Creep was actually offered the Australian licensing of the first Nirvana album — he turned it down ...) and a pile of pretty together record, zine and live reviews. This is pretty damn cool. (Richard Stanley, PO Box 666, Indooroopilly 4068)

**UNDERDOG ZINE #1** (68pp A5): The zine arm of hardcore label Underdog Records, spun off from the label's newsletter. I guess punk is not dead after all; or, at least, the people have life and vitality and a future. This is a slice-of-life communication from what seems like a helluva nice bunch of people presumably intended for us to read as equally nice people. It's well-written, well-produced and provides insight into how others live life as well as they can under our societal circumstances. Contents include a Chicago cheap motels guide, a group of people each describing one day of their life from start to finish, reminiscences of life, a tour diary (8-Bark in Canada), the corporate world, a punk adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, some Underdog band histories, Underdog adverts, opinion pieces and some silly stuff. *Not one*

*droplet* of doctrinaire rubbish. The people writing it have warmth, humour, humanity and fun; reassuring to see. Recommended. (US\$1 cover; I'd guess about US\$3 to Underdog Records, PO Box 14182, Chicago IL 60614, USA)

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21st February, 1990

David, Enclosed: full transcript of Thurston Moore i/v plus sundry comments. It's aging really fast so you may have to keep it in the fridge or just toss it out for the cat. — Brett.

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## Sonic Sexx

### Sonic Youth 1989

#### *Party Fears #19, 1994*

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... OK, so I break the news to the missus: she's been loaned to a friend of an acquaintance just in from the Arab Emirates for the evening. I explain that it's urgent that I get the scratch together for my airfare to Sydney.

"Cool," she quips, "beats the shit out of a night of off-ratings teevee, listening to you mumble and fart!"

Now, time was, when I were a-courting this lady, that nothing could tickle her more than the prospect of a quiet night in front of the tube with me whispering sweet nothings and expressing gaseous appreciation of the fine meal she'd prepared. Our romantic visions clashing, I let it drop and got on the blower to Achmed's hotel room ... seems he'd split — got impatient and opted out for some chicken butt instead. Depraved desert dwellers! ...

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**Sonic Youth** are undeniably a musical force. Regardless of whether taste prevents you from appreciating the full impact, its existence cannot be ignored. If dissonance blocks full passage, denial of (a) the concept, (b) the experience and (c) the instinct only begs the label, in my estimation, of stifling ignorance and obtuse judgement.

The grand tradition of this En Why See stream can take you back to wily old LaMonte Young and further. If you checked with the Imperial Wizard of the Noise-As-Art-Form school, he'd be amused to catch an other-worldly glimpse of the advances that have occurred and liberties taken in the name of his initial premise.

Young's theory opened the paddock-gates for a horde of genius as well as talentless oiks. Harmonic beauty perceived (albeit subliminally or obliquely) through and beyond a wall of distortion, clank, shriek and howl. Yeah, it's in there, but you've got to have the skill to pull it out and waggle its lumpy, mucus-stained body in your audience's face.

The VU got ahold of both slimy legs and yanked; they breathed life into the sickly infant and set it loose in a sandpit surrounded by playmates like the Five and the Stooges. They grew up and handed it to NY youngsters like Television and the Ramone family.

The Youth get spawned from a No Wave slop pile and sidestep the avant-garde faggot tide. They pick up some yoho guitar tips from Branca and move on, making a digestible racket consisting of a simple jazzbluesmetalfuckenfusion.

It's a hot jizz assault with a grounding in smarts that lasts, disc after disc. It's without those worrying patches of diddle-oh that tend to manifest themselves as the filler track, the contractual LP and the jammin' dance tune. I can appreciate the whole effort, but was keen to obtain any scuttlebutt from T. Moore, on their Australian tour last year, just after the release of *Daydream Nation*. He was keen to be off

doing battle with waves (that's a damn lie!), but managed the following from a Surfer's Paradise motel.

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**This is the largest recording budget that you've worked with. Are you happy with the results?**

"Comparatively larger, because we've always worked in a very economical way. This record cost us slightly more than US\$30,000, which, compared to a double album being put out and distributed through a major label ... it's nothing, it's like a day's work. We did it in around five weeks.

"One of the things we like to do is just produce the music; we're interested in studio engineering. Not so much hands-on engineering ... we don't really look for a producer, we look for a good engineer and a good studio."

**Did you set out with a particular idea for the project in mind, or did a lot of the ideas come about in the studio and rehearsals?**

"For the two records before this, we were in a situation where, what with touring and all, we had one month to write all the songs and another month to record, then we'd go and play them; whereupon they'd totally change and become much more fleshed out ... better. After doing that twice in a matter of two-and-a-half years or so, we decided that was a ridiculous situation. When you listen to those records, all you're hearing, pretty much, is the structure of the composition; you're not hearing what would have happened after playing them a hundred times.

"For *Daydream Nation*, we decided that we wanted to spend a little more time writing the material, play it out some and then record it ... but not to any great extent. I don't think it would have mattered how much time we took, we actually did write more music and turned it into a double album. We'll usually record everything that we write at one point because we feel that it's thematically connected."

**You've got a lot of longer tracks this time around.**

"Yeah, I think that's what happened having a lot more time to write. We got involved with longer songs, they were able to develop that way. That was interesting for us."

**Do you think *Daydream Nation* is an album you would have released any time other than a US election year, or is it fairly apolitical?**

"Well, it's apolitical in the sense that it doesn't deal with the business side of politics. It deals with politics in the sense of the relationships between men. There's certain abstracted ideas on that, and they're all interconnected — there's no hardcore party-lines going on. It has a lot to do with situations such as ours: we're in a rock band and we're able to rise above a lot of social situations, social oppressions."

**No way it would have been called *State of the Nation*?**

"We bounced around a lot of ideas for the title. That was a line from one of the songs that kind of rolled nicely ... all of a sudden everybody said, '*yeah, it's connected with the mood of the record.*'"

**Most of the reviews of the LP that I've read have been glowing, it seems a logical progression from *Sister*. How do you answer detractors that latch onto the fact that it's a double album, the packaging, tracks of the length and format of "Trilogy" — references they'd say hark back to concept albums of the seventies?**

"It's hard to say ... just because when we were doing it we'd say, '*these three songs together are called "Trilogy", how are we going to work this "Trilogy" thing?*' — thinking, of course, that we're not going to use that title on the record. We were of the frame of mind of, like, '*why not?*' It's not something that's at all detrimental to the music.

“We all grew up in that period of early ’70s prog-rock. I don’t think we’re copying it musically; it’s just having fun with style. We like to have people look at that and shake their heads. A double album — regardless, you’re going to have people look at that and say, *‘this’d make a really great single album.’* That’s the way it is.

“We’re not setting out to make hit records; we work with record company people who take care of us as far as that’s concerned. Getting all the ads out, setting up shows, we enjoy doing it. It’s a lot of high falutin’ — a lot of fun.”

**The three pieces of “Trilogy” have a lot of obvious instrumental arrangement differences. How do they link? Is it meant to be narrative or linear in some way?**

“It works out to be narrative in a way. The whole record works out to have a narrative theme to it in as far as any commentary that the lyrics have. I think all our records do in a way, but it’s something that comes to you posthumously. After we did *Bad Moon Rising* — right after it came out, I was looking at it, playing it and there was a very direct theme there: Americana. That’s the most successful thing to us: actually seeing a theme that interests us appear on the record.

“With ‘Trilogy’, basically the parts to it were more connected musically because we had been using the same guitar tuning on those three songs. They went together really well.”

**Oblique references to actual persons on the disc — can you clear up any of them?**

“‘Hey Joni’ — Lee wrote those lyrics. I don’t think it’s Joni Mitchell. We tease him about it, but, I dunno, when he was writing the lyrics for it, there was some kind of thing about Joni Mitchell going on. Then there was ‘Hey Joni’ as a pun on ‘Hey Joe’ — *‘Hey Joni, where you going with that gun in your hand.’* Lee thought he’d call it ‘Hey Joni’, but I don’t know, you’d have to talk to him about it.

“We don’t talk out what our lyrics mean, we didn’t put a lyric sheet in with the album.”

**You guys wear out drummers — or do you just like to trade them in before they get too many miles up?**

“Richard Edson was our first drummer. He was more interested in getting involved in film acting, which he’s done. Bob Bert left because we were a bit too rigorous, with touring and whatnot. Steve’s been with us for quite a while and is pretty much a mainstay now. He wears us out. We’re all in our thirties and he’s a young twenty-five-year-old.”

**Your rhythm section has been described as anything from “jazzy” to “perverse”. What are your own ideas? Is there a description that Kim and Steve like to apply?**

“Steve’s a very real, practised drummer, whereas Kim picked up the bass when we decided to start a band. She’d played around with it earlier, but not in any real career capacity. Playing-wise, Kim’s from more of a non-musical standpoint. That combination has made the sound very unique in a way; no-one can really copy it. Kim tends to very minimal bass as opposed to any busy style that a lot of players aspire to.”

**Your packaging and artwork are always interesting. There’s a difference between the packaging of, say, *Sister* and *Daydream Nation*. It seems more tightly directed. How are your final designs reached?**

“Both Kim and Lee come from a visual arts background. Kim grew up going to art school, so it was pretty much her vocation almost since she was a child. But design is always different. With *Sister* I wanted to use a picture by Gerhard Richter, who did the photo-realist painting that’s on the cover of *Daydream Nation*. He had a painting of a child’s face, very romantic-looking — which I liked.

“Lee came in with what was the shape of *Sister* — the cross image with chance photos taking up the space behind it. It was a good idea, so I found some old postcards, magazines, images that appealed to me, and laid them out. We all shared the spaces, everyone brought stuff in and we placed them around. You can see the Scotch-tape marks and the magic marker borders.

“For the *Daydream Nation* cover, we all instantly thought of using a Gerhard Richter painting. We chose the candle because it seemed very ... hopeful.”

**At Christmas (1988), Byron Coley mentioned a collaboration between yourself and the Borbetomagus Horns. He seemed to think it was the hottest item since the Allman’s “Mountain Jam” — you want to confirm or deny that?**

“He asked if we wanted to do that, so I called those guys up. They’re just an all-out maniacal band, extremely serious about what they do. We got together, did it, it came out great. We’ve mixed it, but I think they’re nitpicking it — I got a message from New York that they might want to remix it. Why? I hate remixing.

“Byron’s going to put it out on his label, Forced Exposure. We also have our own label called Ecstatic Peace.”

**Which *Sonic Death* originally came out on.**

“Yeah. SST have a side label called New Alliance, and they’ve put out a couple of Ecstatic Peace things. One was the Coachmen record — a band I was in — also a record by a New York guitar player, Rudolph Grey, called *Transfixed*.”

**There was also mention of a band featuring Lydia Lunch and Kim that opened for your last European tour.**

“Harry Crews was a totally separate thing: Kim, Lydia and another woman on drums. It was like a power trio. They wrote all the songs and went on the road, but not with us.

”They named themselves after a southern US writer called Harry Crews — he’s actually a really great writer — and wrote a lot of songs using his titles. There’s one song called ‘About The Author’. I saw them play, they were really good.”

**Get to see anyone while you were here?**

“Just the ones that played with us. Bored were good, another band called God, what the hell was the other one? ... Lubricated Goat. In New Zealand we played with the Verlaines. We didn’t have much of a chance to get out. It was very busy.”

**When are you likely to be back?**

“I imagine we will be back. To us, it was just a matter of whether it was financially feasible to come to Australia; it wasn’t so much that it was too far away. Now we can afford to do things like this tour and profit from them. I suppose if we came back again, we’d be more extensive about it ...”

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The Youth are still plenty tough. Tough like staring into the bleached eyes of the less than lucid old timer behind the counter of the Military Surplus store. Perched atop a high stool, he leers, giving you a good squint at both gums, and points straight up to the sign that proudly proclaims: “*Bow-hunting spoken here.*”

**Brett Woodward.**

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