

Griggs



Edward Rayner

think he liked the fact we were doing fairly short songs. But I think next time round we're going to try and do it on our own with an engineer. And we'll try and do it in New Zealand."

Why in New Zealand? Do you feel happier here, or what?

"It'd be nice to come back in summer and be in New Zealand. I also think it'd be a good thing to do. To do an album that was going to be released world-wide from here. It'd be a boost to this country and it'd be a good challenge to see if it can be done."

"I've heard a lot of New Zealand stuff since I've been back and I'm very, very impressed. The standard of recording here is just so high and I think we can do it. I mean you don't have to get the sounds everyone gets in America or England. I think it would be more possible to get a distinctive sound here, to get a really unusual production sound. And I think we're ready to be in control of things ourselves now. We certainly wouldn't have been two albums ago. But now I think we've got a fair chance of being able to produce ourselves with a really good engineer."

Tim, you are now the only remaining original member. When Phil Judd left, the pressure, especially in terms of writing, went on to you didn't it?

"Yeah, it did really."

Do you still feel that pressure?

"Yeah. I still feel it. I alternate between being really happy about it and being really unhappy about it. It's a real shame in a way because it was a great partnership, but at the same time it really only lasted for a year. For the last three years we've been writing separately."

"With those sorts of things, you can never hope for them to last too long. It was very, very intense while it was going, but it was an experience I wouldn't have missed because I drew it out of Phil and he definitely drew it out of me."

So what happened?

"It broke down because Phil became increasingly disillusioned with the lack of success here, and once we went to Australia, we became a working band and had to worry about surviving financially."

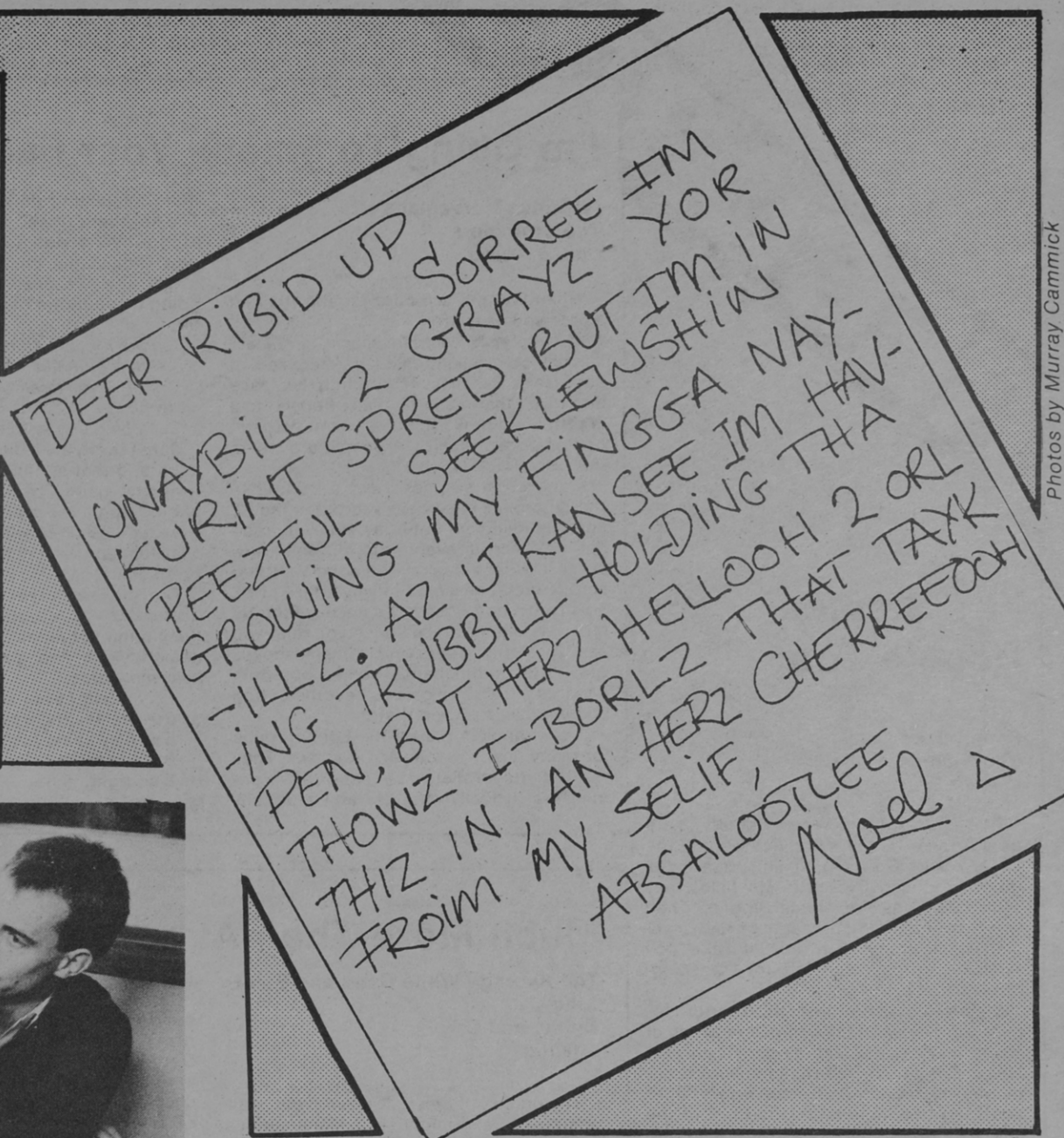
"I mean those early days were pretty idyllic, we were very romantic — just writing songs and dreaming about the future. It became real in Australia and particularly touring America and England. It all became just a bit much for Phil. He began thinking that the music was fairly low on the priorities. It would have been easy to see it that way, but it wasn't really true. Not for any of us... Phil writes very fast. Writes a lot of songs so quickly. And one out of every ten songs was being used. So he just had all this material piling up. He just became really frustrated and his health wasn't the best."

What's Phil doing now?

"He's living in England. He's writing a lot and he's very happy and healthy again and enjoying family life. He's going to try and write songs for other people, write hit singles and that for other people. I'm sure he can do it too."

"He intends to write anonymously and turn out what he considers to be rubbish but I think it'll still be good. He wants to write songs that are fairly blatantly commercial and just make a reputation for himself. Eventually I think he'll be a monster, because he's got something everybody needs now — he can write in a romantic sort of vein, yet at the same time it's really gutsy and powerful. He writes so strongly and his lyrics are so good. I just think he'll be huge one day."

The new album, *Dizrythmia*, contains predominantly new songs, barring one or two 'oldies' — there's one of Phil's songs, "Sugar'n' Spice" and a Judd-Finn collaboration, "Nice to Know". The new songs see a move towards simpler structures, they're not necessarily any shorter but they are perhaps more basic. Is this a deliber-



Photos by Murray Cammick

ate move?

"No, not really, it's just the way I write. A lot of people see it as a conscious attempt to be commercial but I've always written that way. 'Maybe' is more my type of song than say "Late Last Night", which is more Phil's kind of song. The songs we collaborated on — "The Woman Who Loves You", "Amy", "Under The Wheel" — have perhaps got a bit of both styles in them. But the new stuff we're writing now is really exciting and should come across really well on stage. The new ones are much rockier."

"We've always told people that our roots are in the Beatles, the Kinks, the Move and so on, but I think that's becoming more obvious now. I'm getting more drawn to using chords like G, D and C rather than A diminished and F minor ninth. It's possible to write a really good melody over three simple chords like that."

Has the change of rhythm section helped that move towards a simpler approach?

"Yeah, they're more solid."

The other distinctive aspect of Split Enz has always been their very visual stage act, which in England has extended to some of the audience, known as Frenz of the Enz, dressing in like fashion. Is there much of that happening?

"A bit. Most people don't want to look like us, though. But people over there are dressing so extremely anyway."

"That whole visual side of things has taken more and more second place with us. We're far more interested in the music, so I think we'll tone that whole aspect down a little. It's not that we want to change — I think what we've done has been good quality entertainment and if we didn't do it we might as well change the name of the band, because it wouldn't be Split Enz anymore. And there's no denying that the act has gone a long way towards getting us where we are. But at the same time, it's a sort of trap in a way because people expect it of us now. It's quite a tricky dilemma really."

"I haven't formulated any clear ideas about this. It's just an idea I have at the moment. In America, in general, they liked the way we looked. They really appreciate the fact that we are so

totally different. They've seen so many things over there, that to have something come from New Zealand that is different, is quite a shock to them."

So how do they react to the fact you are from New Zealand?

"It adds a certain fascination or mystique to the band. A lot of people especially in America didn't know where it was or anything about it. They think it's over by Africa or up by Norway. It just made us seem very, very strange to them."

Did they think you were a typical product of New Zealand?

"Yeah, we used to tell them that everybody looks like us back there. You could tell them anything — there's no roads, it's all dirt tracks, we used to train by running around with two sheep under our arms. They believe it!"

We'd definitely live here if it was possible, and, eventually, when it's all over, I'd like to live here."

How long is that away?

"Who knows? Could be six months, could be six years, it's impossible to say. The new band is going well and it's definitely more stable in terms of personalities. I mean there are things about the old days I miss, but you can't stop. You've got to carry on."

"I've put a lot of work into the band and I just want to take it as far as we can go. I'm ambitious. I want to make a big splash. I feel confident now that I've got a talent for writing songs and that everybody in the band is talented in some way. So, if we had to stop and start again, we would."

"But we'd still like more than anything for this band to succeed and I'd like to get it to the stage when we're getting hit singles and we're really a success. I want to take the band as far as we can go. Ego comes into it a little bit."

"But I don't like the way music's heading at the moment and I'd like to try and nudge it, in a small way, back into what I think is the right track. To me music is about people who are born with musical talent and who either devote themselves to learning an instrument or who have melodies running around in their heads and can write songs. It's people like that who matter in the long-run."

Alastair Dougal