

# Mending the Enz...

Four years ago, Split Enz had a song in their repertoire which has only occasionally surfaced since. It was called "True Colours" and featured the lines:

*Supposing we knew all about the blues,*

*Could we still pick and choose?*

These words were an ironic reaction to the sterility of the tail-end of the blues boom which still dominated the New Zealand music scene.

It is intriguing, then, that *Dizrythmia*, the latest Split Enz album, to be released early September, eschews the romantic sweep of such pieces as "Stranger Than Fiction" or "Nightmare Stampede". In its place, the new song-writing axis of Finn and Rayner exploit mainstream formats. For example, the most intriguing song on the record "Charlie", uses as its basis recognisably blues chord changes.

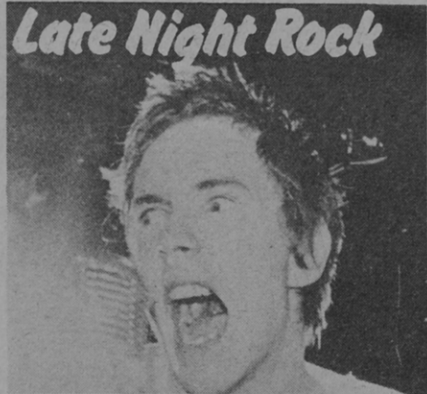
When the band was young, it was refreshing to rediscover old jazz styles, 60's pop music, ragtime, and to find an act which adhered to high standards of presentation and arrangement. Now, "progression" is seen as a blind alley, and nostalgia is last year's thing. Never the last to leave the party, Split Enz have begun to dabble in styles new to them. The break from the past which seemed imminent in the aftermath of the last tour has come.

Whatever the variety shown by the various songs on *Dizrythmia*, most of them have in common a deliberate newness. Stylistically, the one song most like the old Split Enz, "Jam-boree", is the least successful. It is the

only instance of the band trying to imitate their former selves — a band that disappeared with the departure of Philip Judd. It is interesting to note that the other song which survives from last year, "Sugar and Spice," has been drastically rearranged, and even when new did not have the same kind

of lyrical content which ran through the old band's repertoire.

The symphonic approach has been dispensed with. Rather than accumulate melodic and lyrical ideas within a song, they now prefer to take a theme and work it to its logical conclusion. The departure of Michael Chunn and



From September 12, *Radio With Pictures* will revert to late-night Mondays and extend to one hour in length. It will screen as the last programme before shutdown on South Pacific Television, at about 10.40 p.m.

*Radio With Pictures*, in its late-night format will operate on a three week cycle. The first week will follow the present format with film clips of overseas and local artists. The second two weeks will be comprised of material from the US show *Don Kirschner's Rock Concerts*, the first of which will feature an hour-long tribute to Jim

Croce, plus the Eagles with Linda Ronstadt. Also scheduled for the first week is the first screening of the Sex Pistol's "God Save The Queen", which the censors have ruled can be used, but only after 9 p.m.

Some of the material to be used in the weeks when the Kirschner Rock Concerts aren't playing includes: an hour-long Bachman Turner Overdrive special; a half hour of Van Morrison recorded during a US *Midnight Special*, a live concert performance from Bette Midler; and a recording of the most recent Paris concert by the Rolling Stones.

In addition, the programme will feature local acts. Planning is under way to have contributions from Tommy Adderley, Lea Maalfrid, Hello Sailor, Odyssey, Alastair Riddell and Rick Steele.

The move to the late night spot has apparently been brought on by poor ratings for the late Saturday afternoon show. So, if your Mum will let you stay up late, or you don't have to go to work too early in the morning, check out the new *Radio With Pictures*, Monday nights from September 12th.

Emlyn Crowther has meant less use of counterpoint: in its place is a rhythmic directness which belies the album's title. There is also less emphasis on Rob Gillies' melodic contributions, and more on traditional saxophone styles. The result is a feel to the recording much more like a live performance than a process of layering in the studio. Formerly, they were remarkable for their ability to reproduce a complex, studio sound on stage, now they aim for a directness in their recorded product.

The single from the record, "My Mistake", will be New Zealand audiences' first introduction to the new-look Split Enz. In keeping with the new approach, it takes a simple melodic hook-line and restates it just often enough to be nagging but not so often as to grate. The musical whimsy of earlier recordings is not totally dispelled — there are strains of a calliope organ in its syncopation — but the dominant impression is of the straightforward melody. Similarly, "Bold as Brass" adopts immediacy as its principal aim. The closest reference point to this kind of song is probably "Maybe", on the first (New Zealand) version of *Mental Notes*.

"Without a Doubt" features the most well-shaped melody on the record, suggesting that all has not been lost with the departure of their dominant song-writing force. The Finn-Rayner team maintains a long standing tradition for tune writing, even if musical phrases tend now to be shorter and more tied to a vocal catchphrase. In all *Dizrythmia* has as its cardinal virtue a fighter's ability to come back at you, be you bathing or whistling your dog.

Most insidious, winning and puzzling of all is "Charlie". Immediately hummable, "Charlie" is, for all its instant appeal, eccentric. For starters, listeners are bound to speculate on the subject of the song and not to appear churlish *Rip it Up* joins the fun with the polite query — *is it perhaps about Philip Judd's break with the band?* At any rate "Charlie" deals with confrontation and heart-felt regret which brings us once again to the blues. It may come as a surprise to fans to find Split Enz doing something as commonplace as a melancholy ballad, but "Charlie" emerges as an honest, original, superior song.

Out of it all comes the plain fact that the Enz have changed, mainly with a view to survival. It might even be appropriate to say that *Dizrythmia* experiments with survival techniques, in that there are nine songs here and they all use distinct approaches. In particular every song is rhythmically different from its fellows. The former band were rhythmically complex within numbers but uniformly intricate from one to the next. Yet for this new incarnation of Split Enz *dizrythmia* means a directness within songs and a diversity from one to the other. Damn clever plot we call it.

Francis Stark  
Bruce Belsham

## Pussyfooting

Amused  
Inviting  
Mysterious  
Alluring  
Amused  
Split  
Bewitching  
Mysterious  
Enz  
Inviting  
Split  
Exotic  
Saucy  
Luxurious  
Enz  
Sophisticate



witching  
Coy  
Alluring  
Saucy  
Girlish  
Lively  
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Split Enz  
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