



This is XTC

Well I successfully resisted the agony and the XTC pun, only just. I suppose that it's not very often that a band can complain of an overabundance of musical ideas, but that was one reason, ostensibly, for keyboards player Barry Andrews quitting XTC at the end of January this year: "too much rock music to come out through the same outlet" read part of his official press statement. His departure was just after an acclaimed ten date tour of America in association with Talking Heads, so the band after so much favourable press coverage were on the verge of the Megabuck. Overnight sensation, not quite.

Swindon is hardly the last word in rockin' out but it was a good enough stamping ground for Maltese born guitarist Andy Partridge and the Colin Moulding-Terry Chambers rhythm section. In the early seventies these three formed a local band, Star Park, but like everybody else yearning for some badass rock'n'roll they discovered the New York Dolls and as a result formed the Helium Kids, Swindon's NYD's. At the beginning of 1977 when the Clash were singing "Nineteen seventy-seven I hope I go to heaven" and people wore safety pins through their noses Barry Andrews from South London who had been shuffling around Swindon joined the formative XTC. Their emergence coincided with the Great Rock Revival of that year, and because of this far too many people expected them to adhere to the phrenetic monotony that was characterizing much of the pogo drone.

Needless to say their first record, the much-sought-after "XTC 3D EP" which appeared here in 2D form, received conflicting reviews. The main track "Science Friction" was a clever hyper-active little song built around a neat chorus, and "She's So Square" had a fifties pop organ intro which quickly transformed into the same infectious restlessness. The question everyone was asking, well almost everyone, was, were these guys being smart just for the hell of it?

The answer came with the release of their first album, the fresh but childish *White Music*. It was as Andrews pointed out "a two dimensional comic thing, a clearing of decks", but all the same it had some damn good pop songs: "Statue of Liberty", their second 45 banned by the BBC because of the line "And in my fantasy I sailed beneath your skirt"; "Radios In Motion", "Atom Age", "Neon Shuffle" and of course their third single "This is Pop" all displayed Partridge's aptitude for welding a few tricky rhythm changes into a good song.

Yet *White Music* as a whole comes across as a superficial album designed to impress. Like kids with a new toy, XTC wanted to show you how wise they could be, an easy mistake to make on a first album. Over eagerness.

"Statue of Liberty" sold a measly 30,000 and the following re-mixed version of the album track "This Is Pop" disappointed the band with its failure to make any headway in the charts, but their four-gigs-a-week work rate rarely eased up. They completed a European tour with the Talking Heads in the middle of last year, and as a result of that tour Andy Partridge and David Byrne formed a mutual admiration society which was later to be very beneficial for XTC on their 1978-9 ten date tour of the States.

By the time of their second and very accomplished album XTC had grown up. Mind you the environment was different as the 1977 explosion had long since subsided and people were becoming a little more objective and discerning in their tastes. But no matter the tenor of the times, *Go 2* is an album of depth and subtlety, two qualities obviously missing from *White Music*. Two songs, "Meccanik Dancing" and "Battery Brides" both written by Partridge, have often been singled out as the outstanding songs. "Battery Brides" with its droll melody is a not too unkind jibe at the predestined fate of most girls — the wife and mother syndrome awaiting them. "Meccanik Dancing", without going into too much detail, is a comparison of the regimentation of work with the so-called freedom of dancing at the Mecca — the local nitespot. *Go 2* is also notable for the true emergence of Colin Moulding as a sharp songwriter in the Partridge mould. His "Buzzcity Talking", "Crowded Room" and "The Rhythm" are important contributions to the fluid and intelligent music of the first side. The second side is less impressive with only Partridge's "Life Is Good In A Greenhouse" covering any new ground, but taken as an entity *Go 2* was a far more durable and rewarding proposition than *White Music*. XTC, it seemed, were here to stay.

Barry Andrews had other ideas. He had contributed two songs to *Go 2*, and just after the release of the album he began bitching about the idea that the band wouldn't last very long. The brilliantly catchy "Are You Receiving Me" single was released (it was included on the *Go 2* album here) but it was another commercial flop. The brief but rave American tour followed, and then Andrews left to pursue his own career on Virgin records.

XTC are auditioning guitarists and keyboards players prior to their next single and UK tour. They are resigned to the fact that success is going to take a little longer than they planned. What disappoints me is the fact that they have not reaped the commercial rewards that they certainly deserve. Their music is full of drive and novel ideas, and needless to say enjoyment — that's the point of it all, isn't it?

George Kay

TERRORWAYS

For almost a year now the word has been going around that Terrorways are the undiscovered talent among the local bands. No one catching their gigs at Zwines has come away unimpressed, and there is no advertising quite as good as word of mouth. In fact it may not be too long before the band's current cult status gives way to a wider audience.

Chiefly Terrorways go in for amped up covers of 60's gems from the likes of The Who, the Dave Clark Five and Tommy James and the Shondells. Their originals like "Short-haired Rock'n'Roll" and "Never Been To Borstal" give little away in terms of wit or melody, yet the true measure of the band is still in their handling of the covers.

The key to their distinctive sound is in the guitars of Dean Martinelli and Pete Hoffman. While Martinelli supplies the power chord muscle, Hoffman chips in with some nifty hooklines and quick lead breaks. Behind the guitars, the no-nonsense rhythm section of Eddie C on drums and Chris Orange on bass provides the power which makes Terrorways the peerless dance band they are. Up front vocalist John Noone completely typifies the band's anti-heroes stance and emphasis on rock'n'roll for fun.

Fun is what Terrorways are about. Check them out now. Soon you will be the only one who hasn't.

Dominic Free

GARY HAVOC AND THE HURRICANES

Only the wealth of new talent about at the present could account for the fact that you could get to see an outfit as exciting as Gary Havoc and The Hurricanes for free at the Occidental these past few weeks.

Gary Havoc and The Hurricanes are a power trio who truly merit the title. Comparisons with The Jam spring readily to mind. There is the same tough, high energy sound and aggressively youthful stance. Equally tempting is the parallel between Gary Havoc and The Jam's Paul Weller. No one could fault the powerful support of Frank Skipworth on bass and Gary Hunt on drums but there is no doubt it's Gary Havoc's show.

Not only is he a handy rhythm/lead guitarist and able vocalist but most importantly he can put across the excitement of live rock'n'roll. About half the material is penned by Havoc and it really is good stuff. Numbers like "Little Rock'n'Roller" and "Havoc Rules" were always as well received by the audience as the standards from the Troggs, The Who and the Beatles.

You have probably missed your chance to see this band for free. Still, don't miss your next chance to catch them. This brand of rock'n'roll is worth paying for.

Dominic Free



Johnny and the Hookers at Windsor

A couple of months ago *Rip It Up* decided to run a feature article on a number of Auckland's newer bands. Contributors with an interest in specific groups were sought out. Within the time limit their opinions were received, and all was proceeding according to plan.

But — somewhere in the tossing between two editors the introduction to these articles hit the floor. It lay flat on the ground: It gathered dust. It was almost forgotten. And, with only hours to spare, the reality of the situation was discovered. What to do?

Now, *Rip It Up*'s solution was somewhat unorthodox, not to say dicey. Although the original intention had not involved any attempt to combine these five bands in a specific 'movement', a precis of the Auckland 'new band scene' demanded something akin to that. Or, at least, a statement applicable to all five. Who better to compose their own press releases than the bands themselves.

So, on a balmy Wednesday night when the pubs had closed, *Rip It Up* sponsored its own Meet The Boys session. The response was heartening. From the Hookers came Dave McLean, Paul Andrews and Johnny Batchelor. Toy Love provided Chris Knox, Alec and Mike. John, Chris and Dean represented Terrorways, and Gary Havoc spoke for his own band, the Hurricanes. Through a spot of confusion regards timing, only Sheerlux remained absent.

Of course, the dangers with this sort of thing are fairly obvious. Either the bands will stay tight-lipped and superficially buddy-buddy towards one another through a torturous few hours. Or, more exciting by far, they'll rip each other to shreds. Mercifully, for *Rip It Up* anyway, those present shared a mutual respect for one another, although it hardly prevented them from expressing themselves quite openly. Or at least that's how it seemed.

Predictably the kick-off point was money and how to make it. Of the four bands, those who had played in pubs all seem to have suffered a similar fate at the hands of the hoteliers. Initially all preferred to be paid a fee for performing rather than suffer the inconsistencies of door-takings. However, once the band had gathered momentum and a following, the fee, according to Dave from the Hookers, was never enough — that is, equal to the door-takings. The most highly paid of those present, the Hookers currently pull \$100 each for four nights at the Globe.

While all the bands represented felt they were being underpaid, Gary Havoc felt that the discontent among local bands was caused by a more complex problem: radio stations and record companies and the lack of interest both display in NZ bands. All four bands want to record; as yet none have gotten further than demo tapes.

Which still leaves the problem of venues, specifically in Auckland. The Hookers, who of these bands probably get the most work, principally in pubs, bemoan the shortage of suitable venues. Dave: "There are still only three pubs which will take on bands like us — the Windsor, the Gluepot and the Globe. I mean, could anyone of these bands here play the Glenfield or the Pottery Wheel? No way!"

Regardless, the Hookers want to play pubs and they get the work. By contrast, Terrorways find themselves in something of a bind. They feel a touching responsibility to the audience they've built up through months of regular work at Zwines. Pub work would exclude large numbers of their fans as most seem to be under twenty. They're quite content to settle for the occasional Saturday avo at the Windsor. As Chris says, "You can be the worst band in Auckland and still get work; you can be the best and still only play the Windsor."

There's a vast difference between the lot of these two bands alone. The same is true to varying extents with each of the five bands grouped together as new to the Auckland music scene. *Rip*

It Up seemed to think there was a linking factor. There was even a word — 'overwound' — banded about. Sitting on cardboard boxes drinking beer together, did they themselves believe there was common ground?

Gary Havoc cited energy as the sole meeting point. So, what's energy? "Taking off my t-shirt at the end of a gig and wringing the sweat out of it." To Chris Knox, energy is magic. "And I think that all of us here have at some time created some sort of magic." But who falls under the spell? "If playing doesn't do anything to you it can't affect the audience and vice versa."

Still Chris Knox: "Bands like Sheerlux don't have magic. They can do conjuring tricks, but it's all to a formula. Mi-Sex are an even better example. Steve Gilpin has even admitted that he just looked around for what was happening and then did it. If it had been jazz-rock then he'd be into that now."

Then Chris from the Terrorways: "You can't define what it is. All you should know is that you don't have to worry about whether or not a band is sincere. You can feel that." And Paul from the Hookers: "Exactly. It's a feeling. If you make people feel good they'll come and see you ... it doesn't matter about original material and all that shit."

Next, John from the Terrorways: "The first time I saw all of these bands — the Hookers, Gary Havoc and Toy Love — I fell in love with them straightaway. We've all got energy in common. We all play music you can dance to."

And, of course — it had to come — no-one can agree on that. To Chris Knox, ex-patriate Dunedin boy and don't ever forget it, Aucklanders don't dance, they pose rather fast. And anyway, Toy Love don't want to have people showing enthusiasm or approval through dancing. "We'd rather stun them." On the other hand, Terrorways and the Hookers, in true 60s style, want to be dance bands.

Agreement is reached again. All of the bands, it is discovered, nurture the desire to leave NZ and find work in the UK. For Gary Havoc and the Hurricanes this is a serious proposition. The demo tapes are all ready to be mailed off to prospective promoters; they mean it this time. For, as Gary says, "Where else can you go after the Occidental?" Or, more to the point, what is there big to make in NZ?

Unlike the more established bands not one of those present opted for the customary migration to Australia or the US. And although no two bands named the same set of musical influences, they all agreed on the importance of the last decade's British pop. As Dave from the Hookers said, "Everybody in this room is trying to capture the feeling of the 60s and that's why most of us started out. Because we weren't happy with what's going on now."

So, if you're counting, there's another common factor. But is anybody? The bands themselves felt quite content to be grouped together, with the only objection being a unanimous rejection of the sadly absent Sheerlux. Jealousy was not the reason, they claimed. John from Terrorways: "We're really different from the others. But all of us here are much more alike than us and Sheerlux. They're a jukebox band."

But raising no objections to the gradings doesn't constitute any form of agreement. On almost every musical count one of the bands excludes itself. And justifiably so. They are different and that may be why they can enjoy each others' work with such ease. Why Paul from the Hookers can refer to his own band as "just trying to be a dance band while Toy Love are making relevant social comment." But then it was the same man who shortly before leaving said: "If you analyse something down to its bare bones you destroy it. So let's throw this tape out the window." But we didn't.

Louise Chunn