



PHOTO BY TERRY MOORE

Phillips: "And this is me at 14, with my first guitar..."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20 together four or five months and, as became obvious on the Flying Nun tour, still has some growing together to do. How long will that take?

"God knows. I thought it would be ready by the end of the tour but it looks like it's going to take a while yet."

Do you feel pressured by the fact that, particularly now, the Chills are thought of as simply Martin Phillips and band?

"Yeah, that pisses me off. It's something I really want to change. At the moment it's horrible, I'm just sort of standing up there and everybody's watching me — including the band. Everybody's watching me for cues — we're just not working properly as a band."

Is there any solution other than to just keep on playing?

"Well that's the best way, obviously, but we've got a few things we'd like to get worked out ... he said mysteriously."

How are you writing with the new band? Is it a matter of you bringing songs complete to them?

"Yeah, unfortunately, most of the time it is at the moment. It's not the way I want it, but ... Martin Kane is starting to put forward some ideas now. He actually wrote some very good songs for the Blue Meanies. Nothing like that's come forward yet though."

When were the new songs written? During the break between bands?

"Most of them. For years now I've been able to sit down at the piano and play for hours and come up with four or five riffs and put them on tape and the buildup on tape. So one thing I did do in that year was to go through the old riffs and work on old, old riffs and you come up with new things like that. So I finally got out quite a few riffs, old ones. There's a ton more where they came from too, about four 90 minute cassettes full of riffs."

That seems to be reflected in the very riffy nature of most Chills' songs.

"That's the same point again about us not working together as a band — we're not going past that riffy stage. In a way that's good, because I really

enjoy that sort of music but I'd really like to get into the other side as well."

And you were moving that way with the old band.

"Yes, we definitely were then, that was the first time."

What were the criteria for deciding which old songs to drop and which to keep?

"Well, it's not complete yet. Most of the old ones we'll eventually have a go at. There were another six we wanted to get ready for the tour but we didn't have time. I don't know about any of the stuff on the Dunedin EP, I'm really sick of that."

Something like 'Flamethrower' obviously couldn't be reproduced by another lineup.

"Yeah, 'Flamethrower' is totally out. A monument to Marty's drumming."

The three songs on the EP and 'Rolling Moon' are full of fantasy, escapist even. Do they reflect your own state of mind at the time of writing?

"Oh, yeah, I've always been an escapist. When I was a kid I used to be right into C. S. Lewis and all that sort of thing."

Is that element present much in new songs or are things changing?

"I still feel like that but it's not coming out in the songs now because I was ridiculed so much because of it. The sort of 'kiddy pop music' thing. It made me think about it and think that it was actually probably true, so I'm looking towards the more serious side of myself."

How do you write your lyrics?

"I've got a little pocketful of ideas, just bits of paper I keep in my pocket. Also, if you come up with a good riff it quite often just triggers off a whole new train of thought and the words come really easily. But that's what I've been having trouble with lately, the lyrics. I just can't write them."

Why?

"For some reason, the ridiculing ... Why not just write people and write what you want?"

"No, it's not just people really, I looked to myself and I wanted to advance too. That's the good thing about being in the public eye, you undergo criticism."

The common conception of the

Chills is as a pop band. How do you feel about that?

"It really fucks me off. Anybody who's seen us live should know we're not just a pop band. We've got a lot of pop songs but we've got a good array of ... big sort of songs as well. I make damn sure we have."

Roy Colbert claimed on TV once that what set Dunedin musicians apart was that they were real record listeners. Do you think that's true?

"Yeah, I suppose so. There are some pretty massive collections in Dunedin, covering a wide range. I suppose the main reason is because the new stuff isn't as available so they can't spend their money on that so they have to go back and search out the good old stuff."

Does it hold true for you?

"Well, I've just been right into music ever since I was about 10, just buying records and finding new sounds."

What was the first record you bought?

"Ah ... *Rock Explosion*, it was a compilation, because I was right into the Sweet. Then it was Alice Cooper and David Bowie and stuff and a nasty little binge on Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin for a while and then Kiss and then back on the right track."

Do you have an ambition within music?

"Lots of little things. I definitely want to get involved with some movies in terms of rock music because that's pretty well untouched in terms of what you can do getting music across. Because I think seeing a band on the big screen is second only to seeing it live. Like the Who in *The Kids Are Alright* — that was neat."

Do you think you can accomplish what you want to in New Zealand?

"I think so. I think what we'll do is just travel out occasionally. There's a possible Australian visit this year. I've got crazy ideas ... I'd love to just fly to New York — contacts are starting to get closer and closer for that sort of thing. I'd love to just fly into New York for a month and just see what we can do."

If the Chills sometimes failed to come up to their own or others' expectations on the Flying Nun tour it was only because they were judged against their own standard of excellence. Many bands in the country would slaughter to own such songs, or even just the riffs. Whether the current lineup will develop the empathy that permitted the emotional swell of a song like 'Flamethrower' remains to be seen but I think the Chills will find it very difficult to be bad.

"Can I have the interview tape back when you've finished with it? I want to remember that riff I was playing when you switched it on."

And the boy with the faraway eyes is off again.
Russell Brown

hey hey



PHOTO BY TERRY MOORE

Doublehappys: (l-r): Wayne Eisey, Shayne Carter, John Collie

we're the Happees!!

Doublehappys — Towards An Understanding

As part of the already legendary Flying Nun tour the Doublehappys (Wayne Eisey, guitar, vocals; Shayne Carter, guitar, vocals; John Collie, drums) turned more than a few heads. Who?

A History

Shayne, Wayne and John grew up near each other in Dunedin.

"In theory we're all Brockville Boys, which carries quite a legacy of fear in Dunedin," comments Shayne.

Sounds rather incestuous ... "Use that word and I'll string you up," threatens Wayne. "The next person who applies the word incestuous to anything from Dunedin ..."

Only joking. We skip to the Fourth Form, when Shayne sees/hears the Sex Pistols on *Radio With Pictures* and is inspired to write a song called 'Rich Bitch', about the Queen. He takes Pistols tapes to school, plays them to Wayne and prospective drummer Jeff and Bored Games are born.

Wayne: "We were all about 14 walking around with snot dripping out

our noses, spitting at people and getting beaten up and thrown around because we were all really small and wimpy."

After a while Wayne splits to form the Stones. Bored Games proceed to notoriety and a respectable post-humous EP, without ever playing outside Dunedin. The Stones trace an odd path around the country, industry and expectations.

For a time the two guitarists become sworn enemies.

Things improve and they go to parties, get nostalgic and spit on people again. At such a drunken gathering Wayne moots the idea for a different kind of band — one without a bassist or a drummer but two guitarists. A drum machine is christened Herbie Fuckface and the Doublehappys are born. But all is not well between automation and the pair.

"Herbie was such a fucked drum machine," explains Shayne. "He was just a Farfisa organ drum machine with eight rhythms. And there were only two we could use — the others were samba and that sort of thing. We couldn't work out a way to turn it off or anything. A song would end and Wayne would try to kick the Stop button and instead he'd hit another rhythm and it would change or speed up ... and it all came through the PA."

So, mere weeks before the Nun tour started, a real live drummer, John, was co-opted.

Said Wayne: "Suddenly you can put choruses in your songs and stay in time with them! We had great problems with choruses — we'd always speed up and the drum machine would get left behind."

Happy Days

Were lessons learned from previous bands applied to the Doublehappys?

Wayne: "Yeah, the Stones were weird, really. We never really got things worked out. We hated practices. We'd go into a practice and write songs and we wouldn't arrange them properly, we never had the cues properly worked out. When we played the simple songs we could play them really well because we could get some sort of communication going between people but in more complicated songs that required listening to cues and that sort of thing I don't think we really concentrated. Which is something the Doublehappys do a lot more already. All the cues are in the right places, they come off the vocals. With the Stones, before we went into a chorus there'd always have to be a gap of one or two bars — which was probably partly due to the fact that we could never hear the vocals or anything."

Shayne: "I learned how to write songs in Bored Games. I just picked up this old guitar with two strings, tuned those strings into sort of a chord and wrote songs like that. I

think Bored Games were just as good in their day as the Doublehappys are now."

But this band has been different from the start.

"Yeah. The Doublehappys is definitely the most original thing I've been in. Even though we sometimes draw on some obvious influences it really is an original thing."

Make 'Em Laugh

Audiences have met with two dreadful assumed American accents. Shayne and Wayne offering comment, witticism or simple abuse. Two stand-up comedians?

"Yeah," says Shayne. "But we always find it funnier than the audience when we tell jokes."

"Yeah, quite often we're the only people laughing," smiles Wayne.

"I just don't like the idea of standing on stage and being ignored. Like in New Plymouth we played first and it was like being a jukebox. I said something like 'put another 20 cents in and we'll play another song', and all these people just stared at me. I can't handle being a human jukebox."

Shayne: "I thought what happened to us at Auckland University, with people getting heavy and calling us wankers, a lot more enjoyable than having people sit disdainfully at tables 30 feet away and ignore. But then I didn't get beer thrown over me like Wayne did."

Coming to An Arrangement

Something that's struck quite a few people is the good arranging in Doublehappys' songs. Was that a conscious effort on your part(s)?

"Well, it was on mine, definitely," says Wayne. "My idea of a song is something that starts somewhere, says something and goes somewhere. Expanding songs is an easy thing to do, you've just got to think about it."

Do you think audiences pick that kind of effort up?

"There's always a percentage of people in audiences who listen to things like that. The songs aren't meant to be clever. We don't stand up on stage and say, 'We want to be clever, we want people to notice our clever arrangements'. As far as I'm concerned, all I want to do is play decent songs the way I like."

"Actually," adds Shayne, "I think people have an impression of us as a very simple band. They think we play very basic songs."

Sufferin' Artists

Shayne, a lot of your songs seem very bitter ...

"Yeah, that's true. There's nothing better when you're feeling really horrible than to go write a song, see it down on paper. 'Don't Want to See You Again' is definitely ..."

Very emotional — on stage, anyway.
"Ah, you learn to fake it after a while ..."

Who Needs a Bass Anyway?

Shayne: "With two guitars you can do so much more. A bass can be very limiting, particularly in a rock format. You get so much more with two guitars interacting."

Wayne: "I think if we get someone else in it will be a keyboardist, not a bass player."

Forecasts

"I can imagine the Doublehappys fluking a record that everybody really liked — a really popular record. A real fluky one. I think when we go back and we have a bit of time to write some songs with drums in mind, by the next tour we could be a really top-notch band," predicts Shayne.

DH Digest

There is no room to relate talk of pop, playing, booze, drugs, sex, parties, Dunedin, people in pubs and songs of sealions.

Conclusion

The Doublehappys probably gained more from the Flying Nun tour than any of the other three bands. Those who knew the name(s) were, on the whole, expecting a good-natured, funny, shambolic three-piece and that they certainly got. But also there for the taking were some wonderful songs, and the glimmerings of something genuinely original. They don't deserve unbridled praise yet, but if they can stay together ...

Despite all the clowning the Doublehappys are very serious about what they do. They just don't take themselves quite as seriously and maybe that's the best way to be.
Russell Brown



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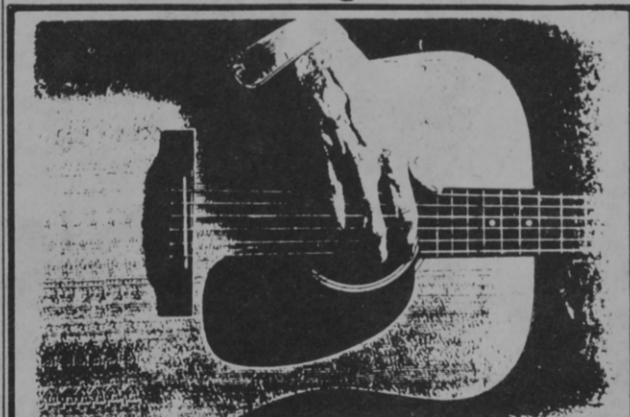


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