

Live

DD Smash, Q.E.D. Logan Campbell Centre, March 2.

In reviewing *The Optimist* last November, Duncan Campbell focused on the rapid development of Dave Dobbyn's songwriting. So fresh and mature were the new songs they rendered a number like 'The Actor', an inclusion from the days of *Cool Bananas*, sounding "dated and heavy-handed". Yet disappointingly, such was the approach of the new DD Smash live lineup, that it was 'The Actor' which seemed most faithful to the recording. Okay, so they were performing in the Logan Campbell Centre but its bunker-like acoustics can't take all the blame.

Theoretically the show should have been very hot. Dobbyn was in strong voice and his usual irrepressible good humour. The band was tight and thoroughly professional and the two-piece horn section perfect for that soulful punch evident in so much of the new material. Then why did it come out sounding so similar in

feel to all the early songs? Even '... What She Do', a pop gem if there ever was one, had lost much of its 'Magic'. Probably a number of factors were responsible. Maybe Dave hasn't fully expanded his performing styles to encompass that wide variety of writing. Certainly the sound mix was often inappropriate, with Peter Warren's drumming frequently nailing down songs instead of lifting them up. (Luther Vandross's 'She Loves Me Back' suffered particularly.)

And of course there is the Logan Campbell Centre. It undermined opening act Q.E.D. via their volume. Jenny Morris has a lovely voice and an exciting stage presence, yet both were to little avail as the band's whole sound blurred into an overloud roar. 'Everywhere I Go' was decipherable with the aid of memory, but most of the other songs (many also possibly very good) were left indistinct.

Dave Dobbyn's songwriting, once immediately distinctive, is becoming less hallmarked due to its extraordinary diversity and development. If the man keeps on this way he's certainly going to become a worldwide chart-topper (optimistic my arse — it's obvious!). I hope his live performances develop accordingly.

Peter Thomson

Dr Feelgood Stringfellows, March 3

No mess, no fuss, just pure impact. Dr Feelgood hit the stage and the audience with the inimitable style of rhythm and blues which has earned them a reputation as one of the hardest bands to come from England.

Lee Brilleaux, the one original Feelgood, proved that he could play R&B the way it should be, displaying some pretty mean, howling harpwork as well as being a proficient slide guitarist. His powerful voice is the perfect complement to Gordon Russell's incredible lead guitar.

The crowd got what it wanted — the Feelgoods ran through all the classics, from 'Milk and Alcohol' to 'Riot in Cell Block No.9'. A viciousness to match early punk, combined with the knowledge of decades of bluesmen provide the unusual product that is the Feelgoods. Those qualities were perfectly demonstrated on numbers like 'As Long As the Price Is Right', where Russell strikes some great power chords.

A magnificent 'Route 66' wound up the set — time for everyone to go home contented and happy. *Whaaaaat!?* No chance! These crowd-teasers had three encores and the people just



Dr Feelgood's Lee Brilleaux, Stringfellows.

couldn't get enough. Guitars behind their necks and even playing among the crowd, they eventually blew away any cobwebs the old doctor might have gathered with a stunning 'Great Balls Of Fire'.
Troy Shanks

Neil Young Western Springs, Feb 22

I went along to see Uncle Neil expecting to enjoy the loud stuff — but (a) It never got very loud; and (b) The noisy stuff was the big letdown of the night.

Young opened with his country band, the International Harvesters and bounced through an enjoyable, well-arranged set. The Harvesters are good musicians, especially the portly, balding fiddler Rufus Thibodeaux, who held up stage left like he'd been doing it all his life — which he probably has.

Next came Young (more or less) solo. As befitted the circumstances, he did most of his chatting to the audience during this set, although a few of his pitches (especially "I'd like to say hello to any Maoris out there.") fell a little flat. He told us about his little daughter Amber-Jean and played the quieter, more sensitive tunes in his repertoire, including, of course, 'Tonight's the Night'. The highlight was a crisp 'Hey Hey, My My'. He wouldn't leave the stage until he'd gotten us all to sing 'Sugar Mountain' back to him, but he didn't quite overstay his welcome.

Then it was time for Crazy Horse — the crowd bristled in anticipation of the real rock 'n' roll. I was disappointed and, if the exodus during the set was anything to go by, so were a few other people.

The band that Young has been touring with in the recent past is the Harvesters, not Crazy Horse, and that became glaringly obvious. The other players just did their best to hold on and let Young go through his chops on guitar. And hey hey, my my didn't he go through his chops. A nine-and-a-half-hour version of 'Like A Hurricane' was perhaps to be expected but Young proceeded to wreak havoc with the dynamics and structure of all the other numbers. Only 'Powderfinger' got up any real tension, because it stayed close enough to the essence of the song.

It should be said that many of those around me (including my companions) seemed to enjoy it mightily, but it shouldn't be enough to just hear the songs — they should be played well. The *Rust* material, for example, had all the right noises, but the band simply wasn't there.

All this and he's a Ronnie Reagan fan ...

Russell Brown

Chills, Look Blue Go Purple, Able Tasmans Waikato University, March 4

The Able Tasmans opened the segment of the Flying Nun tour that hit the Waikato this year. Despite the presence of a large crowd, they didn't gain much reaction from the dancefloor. They have a kind of quirkiness that makes you think that, with another member, they could be NZ's version of the B-52s. But of course it's up to them as to whether that would be what they want. Anyway, as it is there's a certain sense of sameness about the songs, and just how many manic keyboard solos can you take in one night? At least they were enthusiastic and now all I'm waiting for is the authentic Ray Manzarek Orgasm On Stage. Now that would be good.

A different proposition altogether were Dunedin all women band Look Blue Go Purple, who were making their first appearance in Hamilton. They took a little while to find their feet, initially suffering from a poor mix where bass and drums were all that could be heard, but once that was rectified and they gained a bit more confidence, they were impressive. The highlight was

keyboardist Norma O'Malley's little bit of flute playing. The songs ranged from wonderful, flute-orientated ones to some tunes with a bit of real bite, but they were basically all good, original pop songs.

The Chills came on and played a pretty up-and-down 20-song set. Martin Phillipps complained frequently that he couldn't hear himself, so perhaps that was a contributing factor to their inconsistency. The lighting show was wonderfully psychedelic, but this was not one of those nights when every Chills song was great.

There were flashes of the supreme brilliance they're capable of — 'Doledrums' (better than the record), 'Rolling Moon', 'Silhouette', with a bit of real passion and 'I'll Only See You Again'. 'Pink Frost' was almost abysmal on the night, but you can't keep a good song down and the audience reaction was ecstatic (as was to be expected). So, not gods, but at least they've proved they're fallible.
Paul McKessar

VUWSA Orientation 1985 Victoria University, 5-9 March

Orientation 85. Has Wellington ever enjoyed such a rock 'n' roll feast? Night after night of foot tappin', tummy thumpin', good time music. Yeehah! Yer local pundit stayed up and strode out as long as limbs and liver lasted. It sure is hard to slam dance at 45.

Tuesday featured some of Flying Nun's finest as Zippy's Last Tour. First up was Look Blue Go Purple, on their first major foray beyond Dunedin. These women play capricious yet controlled music. Strident at times, mellow at others, the sounds were varied and intriguing. The use of flute was especially effective. Watch for their forthcoming four-track EP.

Three straight-looking fellows with a hardcore approach followed. On occasion the intensity of the Able Tasmans assault was hypnotic. But the overall impression was of an emerging band, refining its repertoire. Provided they don't lose their dynamism or lock into a single groove they will bear some listening.

The Bats whipped new meaning into the tarnished and decaying edifice of country rock. Snaking rhythms and appealing guitar are their fire-brands. Paul's exhortations for the audience to dance paid dividends as the final bracket put most on their toes.

Finally, local heroes the Chills took the stage. Circumstance forced them to play at pace, dulling the impact of slower numbers like 'Pink Frost'. Yet that's small criticism; they played very well and with Martin's precise songwriting and a formidable lineup of talent, the Chills are poised to make an international impact.

Wednesday night, For Crying Out Loud had the unenviable task of opening for Hunters and Collectors at very late notice and apparently one member short. They did not play well. Credit's due for the effort though. Poet Darryl Ward then endured much abuse as he hilariously recited several of his oeuvres.

A revamped Working With Walt followed. Although only one of the former lineup survived, the songs (generally) remained the same. Despite considerable effort the performance floundered. The songs need a serious look as most peter out swiftly with unnecessarily stolid mid-sections.

Hunters and Collectors saved the evening. They locked into solid rhythms and weaved spells. The encores (repeats of the main set) were even more effective.

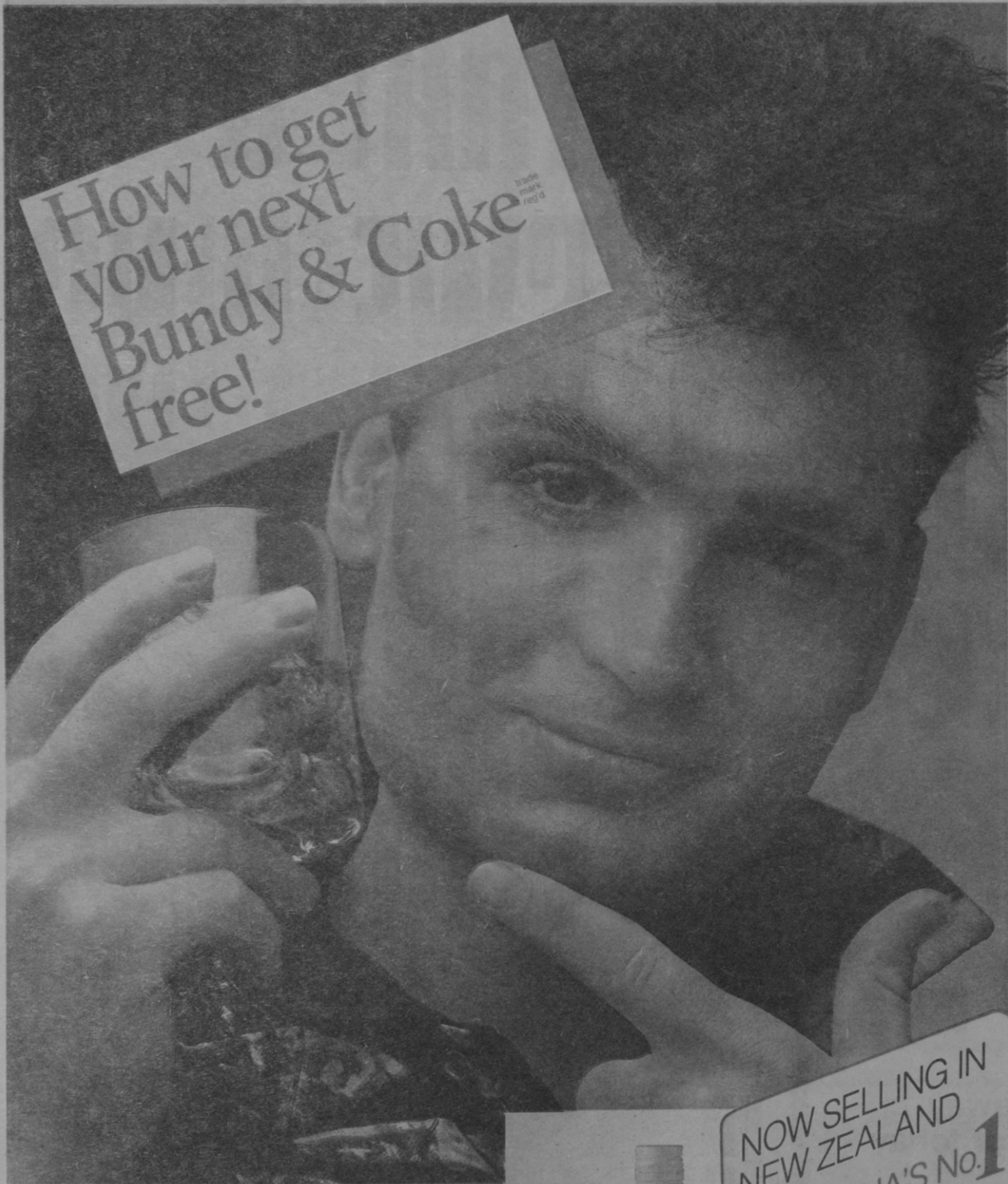
Friday evening, Wellington's Paras enjoyed a hearty reception. They're a pop band with debts to U2 and the Mockers. Young, slick and enthusiastic, they've just turned professional. Beware false gold, lads. Life's not all wine and roses as a teen idol.

The Netherworld Dancing Toys followed with a scintillating performance. As the pace was not frenetic the framework of the songs was kept intact. The dance beat was powerful and the two-piece horn section added a strong bottom end. The performance was capped by the flawless and sympathetic lighting of NZ's premier lightman, Jed Taylor (no relation).

Saturday I saw the dramatic and occasionally bizarre 27 Missing in the Cracks with Sneaky Feelings at the Pulse. Sneaky Feelings turned in a fast performance including a batch of strong new songs. I had intended to return to varsity to see Porirua's excellent Dread Beat and Blood and Herbs, but the best laid plans ...

Marvellous entertainment and, as the different crowds testified, something for everyone. Well done VUWSA.

David Taylor



This is the scene.

You're down at the local, checking out a couple of bands and having a few drinks with a few friends.

Now you know how the conversation always goes . . . albums, videos, groups, that sort of thing. Casually you ask someone, "What's your favourite group?" It's a sure thing that they'll ask you, "What's yours?"

That's your cue!

"I'll have a Bundy rum and Coke, thanks!"

It works every time.



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