

# POP EYES THE SAILOR

Words With Mockers' Andrew Fagan

**He is the Divine Master of the Church Of Physical Immortality. A robust, weathered looking man in a red robe and grey beard, left hand clasped around a wooden staff topped with a globe of the world. He chuckles and waves a cheery farewell, as does his wife.**

**"What a case!" exclaims Andrew Fagan as he clambers back into the rental van; then launches into earnest praise.**

**We've come all the way out to Avondale to see the Divine Master regarding a small boat that he owns and Andrew may wish to buy. Andrew wants to try a few offshore voyages and, faced with upgrading worth several thousand dollars on the boat he lives in on Auckland harbour, is looking at trying to buy one already suitably equipped. Hasn't really got the money of course. But could well have in the near future.**

The DM built his own boat and it's a meticulous piece of work, Andrew explains. The guy was even sufficiently dedicated to work for a year in a stainless steel factory so he could do the mouldings for himself after hours. It's lovely, small but lovely. The Divine Master is only selling it so he can travel to the Middle East and spread the word of Physical Immortality.

"What he said was that he'd like to let the whole world use his boat, just leave it tied up, so long as people brought it back and fixed anything that went wrong with it," Andrew explains. "But it wouldn't work. Actually, a lot of what he said awareness was really true. If everyone was a bit more aware ..."

Do you know who Andrew Fagan is? He sings in a pop group called the Mockers.

The Mockers have by now launched into an exhaustive tour of the country, going just about everywhere and playing a lot of one-nighters. The tour is in support of their new album, *Culprit and the King*. The album is the fruit of keen interest shown in the Mockers by RCA Records Australia and, in turn, RCA America. Where the Mockers' first album was recorded in the "down time" at Auckland's Mandrill studios — whatever was spare at the time — *Culprit and the King* was completed during a two month block booking at a top Sydney studio.

"There were no limits in terms of time or getting things right, whereas with the other one we had to let things go purely because of time. Everything was available — anything you wanted, you could call up and it would be there in an hour. It was all very convenient, just because of the pace they move at. They've always got things happening so it was quite vibrant in that respect. In another way I thought it was quite destructive, that pace

of life in the music world in Sydney, in the recording studio. It was very good, but to actually live there and be part of it ... I don't think I'd find time for the necessary peace of mind to come up with songs. For me, anyway, it was all pretty fast track. But we were just sort of plomped into it. Just sitting watching everything happening and going for it."



The Divine Mocker?

The first inkling of international interest in the Mockers came early this year when they were invited over to Sydney to record a single and some demos and say hi to the folks. 'One Black Friday' came out of that. But the Mockers had rather run out of momentum when another invite came, this time to come over and record a whole album with RCA Australia's new A&R man.

The recent *Radio With Pictures* docu-news segment made it clear that people

very high up were interested in the Mockers as a proposition for success. The man said that the Mockers were one of the bands RCA was really going to concentrate on internationally ...

"It's funny, that wasn't actually clear until I saw the TV thing and saw big Brian there saying that. Obviously I think it's good, because I always make it really clear, and I think it's a good lesson for a lot of new bands coming up, one has to accept the business side of it."

"And the only statement we can make to the record company for them to give us a bigger push or whatever, is our songs. That's the only thing they listen to. This is overstating it, because obviously there's personal relationships and that sort of thing, but the main thing is you're product to them. It's a business and they're businessmen and I accept that."

"And in that game overseas ... or even here — it's things like full-page ads in *Rip It Up* that puts you in front of the people for them to decide whether they like you or not. And that's what makes you known and it's part of the game. That's why we came out of Wellington and stopped doing singles ourselves, because it was so depressing putting them out and no one knowing them about them. It didn't matter if anyone liked them or hated them, just no one knew about them."

"That's where the businessmen and their promotional dollars come in. They say: 'Right, we're gonna put you in front of people.' But there's a thin line between moulding oneself so the businessman will like you and being oneself and

being appreciated by the businessman."

"This whole New Zealand thing, the fact that we're a proven 'product' in New Zealand, they appreciate us. Because for them chart success, money, fan clubs talk; they're business indicators for them. And they say: 'Right, you've done that in New Zealand, you're doing what you're doing, we'll just pick you up.' And there was no talk of the haircutting image thing at all."

"I'm not saying it's been calculated at all on my part — it's just been luck, all the way along. We could've been someone else and they might have said: 'Right, you've got to do this,' but there would have been a few arguments there."

If the pressure had been put on to tailor things to the market? "I'd try to impress upon them the fact that, I don't know about the other guys, but personally it's just not me. That's never been me and I'd have to somehow make it clear to them. The proof of the pudding is all those bands in Sydney like Geishas and Kids in the Kitchen, who are just copying other British bands, the whole sound, the whole look, everything. It's just terrible, but those bands will just be on the heap, they'll never get anywhere, they'll never be spearheading anything by themselves. And I'm not saying that we will be, but we've got our own little niche, we do our own little thing and that's it, it's not a matter of copying any of the others."

The Mockers have played their first gig in some months, and the first since the album, the previous night — Andrew says there were no difficulties doing

justice to the expensive album as a live band.

"Not with the approach they took to recording. The producer was presented with two approaches to take from the demos we did. They could do the whole drum machine-sequencer, very precise sort of session approach or just catch the band basically as the band is, set everyone up in there and play. They decided, quite fortunately for us, that they would go with that sort of live approach."

"The main reason was — and it's all relative and in comparison with the bands they were working with and the session guys who are in the studio all the time — we were really rough. We were really ... unique. Just because we were a band that had worked together and had got the songs from the band putting them together, as opposed to going in there and getting in a session bass player who plays with Sharon O'Neill or whatever."

"They were listening to demo tapes of something that sounded to them really fresh — purely because of what they were used to listening to in the studio. So subsequently they didn't push us in any direction with any of the songs. I mean, there's lots of things on there that we couldn't reproduce live, but they're things that you wouldn't notice. The base of each song is generally very much the way we were doing them before we got them there. Again, it's just luck. If they'd decided the other way, given the power play of the whole thing, the position we were in, we would have been subject to that. But we were fortunate that it's very representative of the band. CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



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