

**'MOCKERS' FROM PAGE 20**

“Actually, to an extent we got a lot more control on this album than we did on *Swear It's True* — with this one there was no one in the driver's seat telling us what to do. They basically said: 'You've got proven product in New Zealand — just do your thing.' We had a really good communication with the producer — what he was doing was getting the sounds to sound so that when you hear it on a record player, it doesn't sound like a demo tape, it just sounds competitive with whatever else is around. Just the sound, not the individual playing or instruments. I'd hate to think what it would have been like doing it the other way — it wouldn't have been us, we wouldn't have been able to reproduce it live and, most importantly, it wouldn't have enhanced the songs.”

“And I think the good thing about the record company in Australia anyway is that they seem to be seeing the swing

back to just basic, pure catching a band as it is. It suits them because it's cheap! It suits them that the Eurhythms album cost \$40,000 to record when the Real Life one's costing \$200,000 in Germany. There's an awareness which obviously gives us more freedom than I was anticipating.”

The Mockers share a certain quality with a lot of other bands from this country — they stake their claims on their songs. That's almost quaint in a pop industry which has seen a lot of money poured into bands who apparently do not have songs to speak of. But on the other hand one of the main criticisms of the Mockers has been their continuing to write just nice little songs, nothing more ...

“I've been thinking about this, and I don't personally aspire to extending the boundaries of pop music. To me the perfection in pop is being involved in writing a

good pop song. 'Good' is so hard to define anyway, but it's those melodies that ... I'm truly enamoured of the concept of the pop song, y'know? Because it's such a honed-down, concentrated thing. It's such a disciplined thing, everything about it is so worked out, it's such a real little craft.

“With the amount of crap pop songs around, the ooh-baby-yeah-yeah stuff, people lose sight of that and I can appreciate that, but at the same time, the really good pop songs, like 'Itchykoo Park' and 'Mother's Little Helper', it's a great craft to come up with something like that. I used to listen to songs like that and aspire to writing a great pop song.

“And that's all within the concept of a pop song and that's not trying to extend those boundaries. I can't see myself ever wanting to extend those boundaries because I don't concentrate all my everyday energies into the music we make. That's one thing I really like doing

and like doing with the band, but there's other things.

“It's probably because I'm not a musician. Probably if I was a musician and that was my baby, music, then I'd be different. Because musicians tend to, I find, clutter things by throwing in a lot of chords and things. That's because they know a lot of chords — pop songs are banal to them because they're so basic. I was reading an interview with Lou Reed's bass player, this gun bassist who was absolutely bored shitless with his songs. But I'm not a musician and if I was I'd probably aspire to taking the songs beyond what they are. The way I appreciate music is just based on how it strikes me, rather than whether it's interesting or whatever. It's almost a layman's point of view I suppose.

“It's the same with poetry, a good poem for me is something that moves me or hits me. It doesn't matter if it's iambic pentameter or



The Mockers (L-R, standing): Brett Adams, Andrew Fagan, Tim Wedde. Foreground: Steve Thorpe, Geoff Hayden.

whatever, just something that gets across an emotion. And I look at something that's a good poem and that's what I aspire to writing. I don't aspire to extending the boundaries of poetry in any way.

“Another thing I like about the category of pop music is that it gives you the scope to take a song in any direction. The song's the master and whatever's going to best suit that song you can do.”

Since the Mockers returned from Australia Andrew has divided his time between the business of the band — a video, interviews, photographs, clothes — and his boat. Naturally, he's been spending quite a bit of time alone on the briny. Now he's going on tour, where there's anything but solitude ...

“It's a real contrast. I like it actually, even though I get a bit cynical and get tired and grumpy at times. I spent a month on the boat going to bed at eight o'clock every night and getting up at seven o'clock before we went to Australia. Then we spent two months in the timeless vacuum of the recording studio, never seeing daylight and eating takeaways. I really got off on it because I knew it wasn't going to last forever. If it did I think I'd scream. And it's the same now, coming back and being on the boat is a change, and being on tour will be another existence.”

He's been spending his time in waders and black jerseys ...

“Black gear's good, you don't have to wash it. The waders look so dicky round town but they're so useful for getting out to the boat. Gumboots are no use at all.”

Of course now the tour's begun it's into frilly stage robes.

“That's what's so good, the contrast. It makes it really good fun dressing up. Everyone does it, whether it's combing their hair in the mirror before they go out or putting on a special outfit. It's good fun — it's just a bit more extreme the way I do it.”

Does your personality actually change when you're wearing the fancy clothes?

“I don't think I actually feel different; it's just like putting on a suit or something. I think you tend to adhere to

it mentally. It doesn't manifest itself so much verbally or physically, but it's like working in a bank and putting on a suit — you feel pretty disciplined and spick and span. So if you want to you can easily slip into a rock star role, but there's very little opportunity for that anyway. On tour it will be a bit that way, with motels and interviews and everything laid on, but it doesn't actually change my personality I think. I hope not, but you don't get a chance for that to be demonstrated anyway.

“It's just role play, that's what I get off on. The whole thing's a matter of role play and it upsets me when people can't fathom that and they don't even perceive that what they're doing in their own lives is role playing.”

“Working in a bank or being a lawyer with short hair and a suit, it's just role play and it's equally acceptable. My brother in Sydney gets dressed up in a suit every morning, but he sees it like that and it's fine. But when people begin to take it seriously and they look at other people and the way they dress and not accepting them then it's dangerous — it becomes prejudice based on your appearance. And that's why I like dressing up in robes and changing roles and that and if people think you're a dick, at least you're getting through to them and hopefully making them think — and if you can do that you're winning.”

There's a sense of the arbitrary about Andrew Fagan being in a pop band. It's qualities other than musical virtuosity that make him the success he is — but he does have a perceptive, idiosyncratic ear for popism. He was at the optimum age when punk suddenly made it rewarding and relevant to play music again; what would he have chosen in 1985's less rewarding climate? But “being in a band” is still a helluva good thing — like the modern-day equivalent of running off to join the circus. And when you set your sights on the stars and then begin to make some progress towards them, it's an adventure. That's what he likes. An adventure. **Russell Brown**

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