

The Prodigal Twin

Alannah's Back in Town

If Alannah Currie of the Thompson Twins ever finds the music bubble has burst, she could well make a fresh start as an actress. In a way, she's already role-playing with her larger-than-life stage personality, but her best piece of acting to date has given fans a glimpse of what it's like to live behind that sort of mask.

Those who saw the video from last year's *Into the Gap* tour will recall a scene on the tour bus where Currie breaks down and tearfully narrates through shattered mascara the pressures of being A Name and A Face, recognised and constantly pestered, unable to go shopping, dancing, do things the anonymous take for granted. It was a vivid and touching moment. And a great piece of acting.

"I'd actually been doing onions up the back of the bus to make myself cry. But it was very easy to do, because we wanted to show in that documentary what it's like being on tour. You're either extremely happy, very high, or very down. There's no midway. That's not what touring is about. There's all that pressure, when you're going out in front of thousands of people every night, having to turn it on because people pay money to come and see you, and you've got to give them what they come to see. Even if you're feeling really bad, you've got to go and do it. That's what I was trying to show.

"I was acting that part, but in a way it wasn't acting either, because it's happened so many times."

Currie speaks matter-of-factly about such things, being right in the middle of another such tour at the time of speaking, backstage at some venue in the heart of Ahmurikah, 30 minutes prior to going onstage. Her voice is already shot, having gone hog wild on stage at Madison Square Gardens a couple of nights previously. But she's still huskily enthusiastic and not just a little excited about the prospect of playing to a hometown crowd very soon. ("How many people does Mt Smart hold? Ooh, I must get all the family along!")

All enthusiasm aside, 1985 has hardly been an easy year for the Thompson Twins. Their high media profile has been maintained, but often in ways they'd prefer to forget. The pressure to produce a creditable follow-up to *Into The Gap* probably contributed to the mysterious and ap-



Alannah Currie, Thompson Twins.

parently quite serious illness that affected Tom Bailey. "Dodgy" is how Currie describes the year past.

"Everything for us before this has grooved along and nothing has gone wrong. But when Tom got ill, which was the first disaster, then we put out records in England and they didn't go to Number One like we expected them to, that was the next disaster. Then some personal things happened which weren't very good.

"But on the other hand, some great things have happened as well, through all the shit that's flowing. We could have split up at the time Tom got sick, instead of finishing the new album. But

a lot of good things have come out, the three of us feel stronger together, there's a lot of loyalty and sympathy there. During that time, fans were amazing, everybody was really supportive and that was great.

"We've also had terrific luck in America in '85. 'Lay Your Hands' went to Number Six, the second-highest single we've ever had, the album has been really well received here and the tours have been going brilliantly."

Once the current tour has finished (Currie will get a week and a half here with her family before continuing on to Australia and Japan at the end of March), offers from Hollywood have to be considered.

"We've been offered the score of absolutely every 'youth' movie that they're doing in Hollywood this year. But we don't want to do that, we want to do something that's a bit older and a bit weirder. We're holding out at present, we're going to sift through what's available. After that, we're not sure. We know we're going to do another album, but we might take a break from each other for a while, and do individual projects."

The desire to be an individual within what has become a very structured system is the ambition of any member of an established musical group. Achieving same is probably today's greatest mark of success. Look at Sting.

Here's *To Future Days* has hardly had an easy gestation period. As mentioned before, there was a point when everyone was ready to jack it in.

"The title really takes on a new meaning," laughs Currie. "Originally it was meant to be really optimistic, 'Let's go for it,' but after all the ups and downs, it became 'Well it can't be any worse.'"

"But I'm really pleased with it all the same. It took longer to make than any other album, there were a lot of emotional dramas during the making of it, between us and other people who are associated with us, then Tom got ill and we switched from the Paris studio to New York and we had to hang out for about six weeks in Barbados (insert your own cynical remark here) till we could get another studio and finish working with Nile."

Nile, of course, is Nile Rodgers, Mr Chic and listed as the album's co-producer. He also jammed with the Thompson Twins in the Philadelphia section of last year's Live Aid charity bash.

"It was a complete mistake, the way he got involved. Tom was producing this time, after co-producing the last two with Alex Sadkin we decided it was time we did this one ourselves. It was going fine in Paris, we'd done seven tracks and then Tom got really ill. We lost the studio time and Nile was just asking through a friend how we were doing. We didn't know him that well at the time, but when he heard about our problems, he said 'I'll help them finish it' That's Nile all over."

In return for saving the Thompson Twins, Rodgers will enlist Bailey as producer for his own album, sometime this April. The New York salvage job on *Future Days* coincided with Live Aid, hardly a classic performance on the Twins' part, but then that wasn't the purpose. Rodgers ended up jamming with the band and Madonna.

"When Geldof called us and asked us whether we'd do it, we said 'Fine, as long as we can do it in Philadelphia, rather than going back to London.' We got a band together, mainly through friends of Nile's and other people we knew. We hadn't played live for eight months, but then it wasn't a proper gig. For us it was a bit like being small children at this magnificent birthday party; 'Ooh there goes Bob Dylan, ooh there goes Tina Turner, there goes Jack Nicholson.' We were really like five-year-olds.

"When we went onstage, we were playing in front of 90,000 people and billions more on television, it was an incredibly hot day and you just got this glorious sensation that for once everyone was focussed on just this one thing. By the end of the day people were saying 'Led Zeppelin's on stage now, Alannah, are you going to watch them?' And I said 'No, I'll see them at home on video.' We were just exhausted."

The jam of the Beatles' 'Revolution' which closed the Twins/Madonna portion of the telecast led to the inclusion of the track on the *Future Days* album.

"We'd already recorded that track, but we weren't going to put it on. When we work in the studio, we always have a piece of music that isn't going on the album. When we can't think of anything to fill the track that we have available, we generally do something mad and manic and totally unlike us. It usually ends up as a B-side and this time we did 'Revolution' because it's one of the few songs that all of us like, plus we'd never done an out-and-out rock 'n' roll song or a cover version before. Steve Stevens from Billy Idol's band did the guitar, and it was really exciting and fun to do. Then when we played it on Live Aid it just seemed appropriate, not just for the words, but as a song which everyone knew. After that, everyone said we had to put it on the album."

"We've had a lot of flak from that too. A lot of people think 'How dare they,' as though the Beatles are untouchable. They're forgetting that when the Beatles started playing, 80 per cent of their songs were cover versions. Stupid haircuts too (laughter)."

1985 will be remembered as the year in which musicians decided to Go Public. Live Aid started it, followed by an anti-heroin campaign in England (coke and Angel Dust are the U.S. targets) and culminating in Miami Steve Van Zandt's 'Sun City'. We all knew Pretoria was Babylon, but what prompted all this?

"I remember when we first started, people were saying 'Don't get political, people don't want to hear about that sort of thing.' I didn't want to not say anything, so we got around it in other ways. But by the time '85 came around, people had got sick of the political climate, keeping their mouths shut and not saying what they wanted to say. I think it got so desperate in '85 that we decided we'd do what we could to help, because you couldn't just close your eyes."

'Don't Mess With Doctor Dream' is the Thompson Twins' contribution to the anti-heroin crusade. Currie readily concedes that the music industry has to bear some responsibility for mak-

Do da Coruba.

One taste is all it takes.



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