

Bats Over Europe

Why did the Bats fly north? "For a holiday!" said guitarist Kaye Woodward on their return home recently. But besides sightseeing on their three-month European sojourn, the band played some concerts in Britain and Germany, recorded several songs, and organised a single release. They attracted some notice — their Dingwalls gig was reviewed by *Melody Maker* — and, most importantly, took notice of the European music scene.

The band played 10 gigs while they were away, including supports for the Screaming Blue Messiahs in Berlin and Alex Chilton in Nuremberg during their 10 days in Europe. According to Woodward, the response was best from the European audiences: "They dance a lot more and are more vocal than London audiences. Apparently out of London, they react more, they're just a bit cool in London."

"In London," says drummer Malcolm Grant, "there seems to be a lot of bands that have as much fun playing as they would working in a factory — there's not much money in it and they're working at it all the time, waiting to be noticed. It must rub off on audiences."

Getting noticed is the hard part. "Things take time," says bassist Paul Kean. "The music press take a while to click on to a band. There's all these stupid things like if you play the right venues they'll look at you, if you have the right press kit."

While in London the Bats recorded a three-track EP at the Point Studios, the same studio the Chills used. *Made Up in Blue*, backed by 'Trouble in this Town' and 'Mad on You,' will be released in Britain on Flying Nun through Rough Trade. "We recorded there because we didn't have any of the distractions we have here," says Kean. "We only had to think about recording, and the Bats ... plus we got a very reasonable offer to use the 24 track



The Bats (L-R) — Paul Kean, Robert Scott, Kaye Woodward and Malcolm Grant.

studio." That offer came from Craig Taylor, an expatriate New Zealander connected with the studio; Taylor also assisted the Bats with bookings and promotion.

The band also spent a week recording in Glasgow, where a New Zealand music fan offered them the use of his 8-track facilities; the half

dozen songs they recorded form the basis for an album the Bats hope to have out by Christmas.

After delaying their visit to the Continent because of the Chernobyl scare, the band whizzed around seven countries in 10 days, travelling in a van. In Berlin, where they supported the Screaming Blue

Messiahs in front of 1000 people, they got their best reaction. The audience demanded an encore: "Ja, Ja!" laughs Woodward. The proprietor of the Berlin Loft said the Bats were more human than most English bands that played there:

"She said we were uncool," says Woodward. "Are you ze band?"

"You're not cool!" She thought we were quite sweet. Then she brought out the champagne."

What lessons did they learn from their trip?

"I think we could organise a lot of things ourselves," says Kean. "We were relying on promoters to get us gigs over there while we could have approached some of the venues directly. Also, we probably wouldn't stay in London as long as we did — if we went back, we'd concentrate more on Germany, Holland, perhaps Italy. We'd do more gigs, in less time."

"You could organise it from here. Now we've got all the contacts, if another band wanted to go over, we can give them a lot of hints."

The last six months, the Bats have been working virtually fulltime, with their farewell tour before they left New Zealand, and a brief tour down the country on the way home. After the release of their EP here, they'll finish off the album they started in Glasgow. "I hope the next six months will be a bit more relaxed," says Kean. They should be, if the Bats maintain the realistic approach typified by their working holiday in Europe:

"We plan to keep it going like it is now," says Woodward. "So it's still fun." CB

POSTERS, PEKING MAN, JIMMY BARNES

SHAKE!

No. 10 JULY/AUGUST 1986 \$2.50

MUSIC + STYLE

Princess

A-HA ROBERT PALMER MOCKERS
FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS BLOW MONKEYS
HUNTERS & COLLECTORS RAP, REGGAE, DANCE

ON SALE Magazine & Record Stores & Dairies

If you wish to purchase by mail send \$2.50 to *Shake!*
PO Box 5689, Auckland 1.
 new *Shake!* No. 10
 subscription (6 copies)
\$14 commencing issue

Name

Address

Enclosed \$

'POGUES' FROM PAGE 14

except it's a lot bigger and it's still happening, whereas London's a bit run down, it's a bit of a dump — but there's still all sorts of things going on. I don't like it the way it is, but I still love it ... *schickikihk ...*

The video for the Pogues' 'Pair of Brown Eyes,' by Alex (*Repo Man*) Cox was, albeit surrealistically, hard-line political, more so than Pogues' songs, but Shane attributes the whole video concept to Cox, a staunch Labourite. Unsurprisingly, the video got shown very little on British TV. Any regrets?

"Only that it didn't get shown ... *hickschschik ...*"

Shane's unaware of the week's developments, which saw Stiff kicked off the *Music Week*/Gallup indie charts, voted out along with Beggars Banquet by the other indie labels because of their major-label distribution deals. He feels it's unfair to Stiff but not really relevant to the Pogues:

"I mean we're not really an indie band, if you mean a sort of cult band — but they're an indie label I think."

You are, however, considered a "drinking band"

"It's all *loies ... hickschschik ...* well, no, when we started off we did play drunk a lot, and I think most of our audiences were drunk. I should think to a large extent most of our audience still is drunk ... *schickikihk ...* but I don't see what's so unusual about that anyway. I mean what are you gonna do at a fuckin' gig except drink? Knowattarmean?"

You're a well-appointed man — are the Pogues a stylish band?

"Stylish? Oh yeah!"

It only takes a good reading of the lyric sheet for *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash* to show that Shane MacGowan is a lyricist of substance. The words to, say, 'Old Main Drag,' are not only vividly, unfussily evocative, but they display a rare sense of rhythm, even on the printed page.

Do you feel part of any literary tradition? The humour and realism would echo Brendan Behan for one.

"Brendan Behan — well I try and write lyrics that are actually good, good to read. Yeah, it's part of a tradition, cos it's the Irish ballad tradition, which is very literal, much more so than most popular music. And it comes from the poetry, most Irish writers are part of a tradition too — and the music, the best Irish songs you can think of combine the two traditions. It wasn't written down for hundreds of years, it was passed down by mouth, either sung or spoken. Hopefully we're part of that ..."

Do you make a conscious attempt to write from real life? I think a certain kind of people everywhere could relate to 'Old Man Drag' ...

"The meat rack, *khicsckch ...* it's a fairly common situation. But what else do you write about — your own fuckin' hang-ups. Yeah, I think it obviously always describes something, whatever it is."

Before your, um, break, the Pogues had been playing live almost constantly and that seems set to continue. Are you happy with that?

"Yeah! What else is there to do?"

Even though it takes you away from good places like this?

"There's good pubs everywhere ... *hickschschik*. Not as good as this, but it's good to have a drink in a different place ... every night ... *kishkikik*."

Do you ever find it strange that people can identify with what you do as far away as the USA — or the Antipodes?

"Well, why not? It's simple music about simple things that everybody's got some involvement with."

Universal.

"Yeah ... I suppose so. It doesn't seem to matter whether they can understand the lyrics or not. I dunno, I suppose it's just music with a bit o' guts and good tunes. Y'know? *Kischkikihikihk ...*"