



## 'Legless' Llamas

### The Alpaca Brothers Ride North

The first time I saw the Alpaca Brothers, one wild mesal night in Hamilton, I watched them and thought, "Hey, you don't even need to look like you can play your instruments in a 'normal' way to have fun and be good." The other night I saw them support the Cramps and the same thing applied, but now Nick knows what those dots between the frets on his bass mean. Progress, eh?

One Saturday afternoon, we sat in the backyard at Ardmore Road and tried to talk. It was difficult. Nick blames it on the Full Moon the previous night — "We all got a bit wrecked." Bruce's contribution is "I feel jaded."

The Alpaca Brothers were formed in Dunedin, "and first played on June 7, 1984, after a whiskey-inspired bash," says Nick. "We borrowed a drummer and started play-

ing." Nick plays bass, Bruce plays guitar and sings, whilst new member Paul plays another guitar. Drummer Steve is absent — "a slack bastard" says an anonymous voice on the tape ...

Live, the key to the Alpaca's sound is Nick's bass. Odd yet wonderfully effective — the closest equivalent is probably New Order's Peter Hook. It is that near-elliptical rhythmic structure emerging from

the bass and drumming that so distinguishes the Alpacas.

Nick says, "Early Joy Division, that's what turned me on to listening to music." Paul says, "The Great Unwashed." Bruce says, "Country and western," and everyone laughs.

"Everything you ever hear is an influence though," says Nick. "I mean, I don't know enough about it to go, 'ooh I like the way that guy does

that, I'll try and do it'."

The songs all appear in a serious vein — Bruce obviously has many possessive tales of dark happenings and sordid events to share ...

"The man next door is finished digging his grave he lines up the family like for a snapshot

bang! bang! bang! he shoots them all dead then he turns around the gun and shoots himself in the head.

It's no joke, but sometimes you laugh ..."

But their's is an oddball sort of dark vision, not so twisted that it's funny, but still ...

"When it stops being fun, I imagine we'll stop," says Nick.

"But it doesn't mean that some of the things we're doing and talking about aren't without passion, emotion or higher hu-flung," offers Bruce. After all, 'It's No Joke' is it boys?"

"The guts of it is a good time," says Nick. "It's a masochistic urge to tear out your belly in front of people!"

The Alpacas have made three trips north in the space of little over a year, gaining exposure away from the Dunedin "scene". Why travel such a great distance so frequently (especially compared to other Dunedin bands who don't leave the South Island)?

"It's good fun," says Bruce, while Nick says they're sick of playing

down there all the time, having to play too much to too few people.

The Dunedin scene still remains healthy though ...

"I don't know why that is," says Nick, "but at any one time there might be 10 or 12 bands you could go and see."

"They're all accessible too," says Paul.

"Oooh, you mean to your ears, or that you can go and see?" Nick looks doubtfully across.

"Go and see."

"Right, yeah. There's even places to play there," says Bruce.

"We're doing something ourselves though in Dunedin with Chippendale House," says Nick. "People tend to support it and come a bit more if they feel involved rather than paying at the door and getting a dirty look from the bouncer."

But the Alpacas certainly don't fit in with any other bands as an identifiable "Dunedin sound" do they?

"I don't know if there is a real 'Dunedin sound,'" says Nick. "I think it's a myth invented by someone who just wanted to group lots of bands together. The Clean thing's what started it — big washing guitars."

"Perhaps it's cos the PAs are so bad down there," says Paul. "The tone of the music seems to change when we come up north. Yeah, that's another thing — coming up here to play on nice equipment!"

The Alpaca's EP is out now, and

I'd call it a better investment than Brierley's shares, but then what do I know about a bull market? Bruce says *Legless* is a "lucky one — we actually recorded it in my house with all borrowed gear."

"It was a bit Mickey Mouse at times," says Nick, "and we had to lug everything upstairs ..."

"But our tape gained something in the final pressing," says Bruce, "which is something unheard of in New Zealand. Just another miracle along the line."

"Terry Moore had a big hand in it," says Nick. "He's a trojan when it comes to engineering — he worked really hard for us."

Bruce laughs. "We were all carked out on the couch and there was nobody listening to it but him!"

"Next year we might spend a bit more time playing," says Nick. "Steve's thinking of having a year off varsity — right now we're really squeezing everything round him. But next year ... go to Japan, double live LP at the Budokan."

Digital stereo compact disc?

"Of course! Yep, that's my dream ..."

The Heavy Bit — pearls of-wisdom ...

Nick: "Always measure your block and play our record loud."

Bruce: "Who knows? My favourite colour is puce!"

Paul: "Bananas. Yep."

Paul McKessar



# EDDY GRANT

THE NEW ALBUM

# BORN TUFF

features the single  
'Dance Party'

Written, Arranged & Produced by  
by Eddy Grant

