

Dutch Courage and Dan Destiny

The Chills in Europe • By Russell Brown

I have a theory. It's been my belief for a while that reverie of a certain kind is a significant part of the New Zealand character. It's that disposition to sit back and dream, more especially in this case to recall, to yarn, to embellish memory.

You'll see it at its most pronounced in New Zealanders away from home; prompting each other into recollections of old TV programmes, seeing who can whistle theme tunes, echoing songs from dead hit parades, remembering five-cent ice creams and 50 cents to the pictures, or as far forward as the first, fifth and fifteenth times they got drunk and sicked up and swore never again. Some great parties, the better gigs and one or two sunsets.

The tendency to shining memory marks our country's literature too, be it the well-known callings-up of Janet Frame or Ian Cross, or the heart of yarning in

Sargeson, Morrieson and Crump. It's the nation's relative youth that makes this storytelling essential. It's a setting-in-order of the past, laying a base for personal and national myths. On the other hand, the Maori have had a lot longer to listen to the land — and a rich oral tradition to match.

The further you are from the jaded modern world, the more time there is to make a good story of the past. As that past becomes at once less and more "real," people, places, objects and events are accorded totem status, they serve as landmarks. People begin to collect physical and emotional memorabilia. For the kind of people who read this magazine, phonograph records are often the most vivid totems. Within an established record collection lie highs and lows, hopes, dreams, pride and creeping embarrassment.

Not surprisingly,

Martin Phillipps of the Chills has an established record collection. He draws too. He drew a picture for the inside cover of the first issue of the *Jesus on a Stick* comic, a fine line drawing called 'Machine's Crossing.' In the picture a wide-eyed young face stares out the back window of a bulbous old car with a number-plate reading "Holiday," on the road in the middle of nowhere, probably Central Otago. Huge power pylons carry cables high over the road and off into distant foothills. But the wide young eyes see the lines in the grasp of alien metal giants, who march off into the distance, unnoticed by all who don't take the trouble to look, then as a convoy of swaying elephants.

It is quite a haunting picture. The car and its occupants will stop sometime for five-cent ice creams.

and has so far released *Tuatara*, the Verlaines' *Hallelujah* LP and the Bats' *Made Up in Blue*, recorded during their tour last year. Set for imminent release (it has been "due out in two weeks" for some time) is the Chills' *Leather Jacket*/*Great Escape*, which may top the English indie chart. To follow are Sneaky Feelings and Tall Dwarfs compilations and the EPs by the Jean-Paul Sartre Experience and Look Blue Go Purple.

Now Taylor has backpedalled the secure publishing job and thrown himself into the Chills. He is aided by English journalist Martin Aston, who handles all the FN press for the love of it, which is considerable. He says he identifies strongly with the Nun experience, even though he's never been within half a world of its homeland. He does, however, have abnormally large collections of comic books and records.

Aston arrives and the pair sit down and compare their respective guest lists for the Dingwalls gig. They snipe good-naturedly: "You're giving him a plus-one? Look, there's just no way..." The list is swelling and Craig will have to placate the Dingwalls management by paying for most of it. "Look," he sighs, "get yours down to the bare minimum and I'll get it typed up. It always looks less typed up."

The tour party begins to arrive. First are Justin Harwood and Andrew Todd, bass and keyboard players respectively in Chills Mk 10. If you don't already know the well-chronicled Chills saga, Phillipps searched long and hard before choosing these two and drummer Caroline Easther to replace the band which dissolved after the first English tour. Commitment to the band, one of the flaws in the last Chills, was one of the key criteria in choosing new members this time.



Soundman Andrew Frengly with touring vans and genuine canal as backdrop.

Justin explains that the band is 14 New Zealand gigs old and that while some of those were good ones, the band won't be playing to potential for at least another two or three months.

Caroline doesn't show, but sound/lights partnership Andrew Frengly and Lisa Coleman arrive, along with Martin P and his girlfriend Kate Tattersfield. Craig's mate Nicky Tesco, the old Members' singer, calls in too. He's a songwriter/producer now. Not to mention a talker. It being a Sunday evening, things are adjourned to the pub, where the jet-lagged ones have one pint of something strong and look like falling over.

After the pub, Doug Hood (who, as all the fanzines will tell you, used to be soundman for the Enemy) phones up from Auckland to see that things are going okay, which they are. Tongues get looser and Craig explains publishing to Martin P, who listens intently. It will be good to try and hold on to the Chills' publishing for as long as possible, he explains. But in the short term that involves coming up with some money, this is not like the neighbourhood music industry in New Zealand. There is money at every turn in the real world.

It gets late and Craig leaves to drop off Martin and Kate in his battered BMW. You see battered BMWs everywhere here — they're two-a-penny in a relative sense and no one has any particular regard for them. They're a kind of a wide boy's car. About half an hour later, Craig phones. He has been picked up and breath-tested and is at Battersea copshop. It's okay, he's under the limit, but they won't let him drive. A cautious breath of relief is breathed.

This is the news: the color has drained from Auckland — no venue, dissolution. A few people are a little lost; where do you drink when the party's over? A golden year fades? Or just changes. Those as can move on, do. Peel is in Sydney, happyish, sends her love, sorry about no letters. There's a pic of the Battling Strings in the paper — Andy looks awful!

Feb 11

London Camden Dingwalls

In the afternoon at Dingwalls the place is still a little bit sweaty and beery, which you'd expect after all these years. Martin is off doing one of his three interviews for the day and the others are setting up around a half-finished meal of pizza and gruesomely English cake. Everyone is upbeat, energetic and a bit nervous. It's hours before the gig. Caroline takes a couple of pho-

tos of the stage.

By the time most of the hours have passed there's a slow queue stretching around the corner inside. Inside, there's a bubbly, excited mood and every expat NZer you never knew was in London. There are a lot of us and we kind of look the same.

There's S—lager at the bar at a princely £1.20 a can and not shifting as fast as it did last time. So maybe most of these people aren't ex-Kiwis. They just kind of look the same. There's the American at the bar who likes the Chills a lot but actually flew over from NY to see Alien Sex Fiend tomorrow night. There's Dave from HMV in Norwich who loved the Chills last time. He's just bought the cassette of *Tuatara* and is a bit put out when he's told that most of the bands on it aren't around any more. There's a lot of must-keep-in-touch and address exchanging.

Dingwalls is a great place for a chat. Not such a good place to see a band really. That's the thing you find out when all those names you clocked in the *NME* gig guide become reality — most of the venues are public toilets with car stereos for PA systems. Dingwalls' major foible is a mezzanine platform which obstructs the view of the stage for anyone who's not on it, or in front of it on the dancefloor. So after the young, naive My Life Story from Brighton and the party cool of New York band Crash, two-thirds of the crowd crams into less than one-third of the space to see the Chills. It gets vigorous quickly. A bunch of No Tag fans demand to know why No Tag aren't playing as advertised (a misunderstanding).

It's immediately clear that this is a very different band from the last Chills. The first thing apparent is a great big, tensile band sound that hasn't got to know itself yet. At Dingwalls the band doesn't ever murmur quite like past Chills have but there's a real unified muscle at the high points. For the moment it's the thunderous re-entries of 'Ghosts' and the buzz of a revitalised 'Leather Jacket' that translate better than 'Night of Chill Blue'. In the back of your mind you worry a little about the Chills taking the wrong road someday and ending up the living hell that is *tight'n'ragey*.

But in the end, after an encore ending with 'What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?' ("... sodomise and keelhaul him ..."), yes, it's good, it has worked, really all this gig was meant to do. It's unfortunate that so many people have paid their money to watch the gig on TV monitors at the back, but there's always the Savoy Ballroom in a month's time.

Craig and Martin Aston are well pleased. Martin talks to some hack who reckons they were tamer than he thought they'd be, and he's right, even if he did spend most of the gig by the bar. CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



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26 — CHRISTCHURCH (Old Star Tavern)	6 — WESTPORT (Westport Motor Hotel)
27 & 28 — CHRISTCHURCH (Playroom)	7 — TAKAKA (The Globe)
29 & 30 — TIMARU (Terminus Hotel)	8 — MOTUEKA (Post Office Hotel)
May 1 & 2 — DUNEDIN (Oriental)	9 — NELSON (Metropolitan Hotel)
4 — GREYMOUTH (Golden Eagle)	

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