

pass, and it became electro funk." Bambaataa still sees himself as "a DJ first and a recording artist second." Along with Kool Herc and Flash, Bam created the art of mixing on the wheels of steel. Taking the break parts from any record, the most popular being 'Dance to the Drummer's Beat' (Herman Kelly Band), 'Apache' (Incredible Bongo Band) and 'Mardi Gras' (Bob James), and jamming the beats into something new. Bambaataa would use anything as a break beat, like the intro to the Rolling Stones' 'Honky Tonk Woman,' and make it funky.

"I played a lot of things, rock, reggae, heavy metal — anything that was funky, had a good beat, and was danceable, I played it. I used to split my parties up, records that were just dance, then beat records for the hip hop people, then disco to calm it down, then oldies that bring back memories and make people do stuff to the Jacksons, old Motown and James Brown."

**Old School**

Hip hop at the moment has never been stronger, but seems to be going through an internal struggle between so-called old school and new school. Like new boy LL Cool J, on the savage 'Jack the Ripper' yelling "Show that old school sucker how you do it."

"There's too much conflict with

that, I try to make hip hoppers wake up. It's not even 20 years old, you gotta stop this foolishness ... there's whole generations of music which you could say old school and new school, but there is really only one school, and that's the hip hop school. Gotta stop this argument "A lot of sluggers get together and form unions and organise when they have trouble with their record companies, and rap groups are so competitive against the others, they gotta wake up and form a union. There's still a lot of rap groups who still to this day are getting jerked left and right, don't know about licences in other countries, don't know about publishers and copyright, or IRS. They gotta wake up to the reality of the music industry."

To a lot of black people that industry has treated them in the same way other power structures have, as in the case of the doo-wop boom in the 50s. It's comparable to the hip hop scene today.

"The same thing they did to the doo-wop groups they do to the hip hop groups. They did it to the great dancers. It's time to start educating themselves to the world. Time to wake up and face the truth, get rid of all those history books that they teach in schools and write history for the truth it is. Like saying Columbus discovered America. Make people bear witness to the truth. Then they see what the people of Africa, Italy, New Zea-

land and that, did to make human civilisation better. Then people can respect each other better. Show people what it is."

**Gang Time**

As many rap songs ask, what time is it? It looks like it's gang time again in the USA, a sub-culture that has never left urban America. The colours still fly.

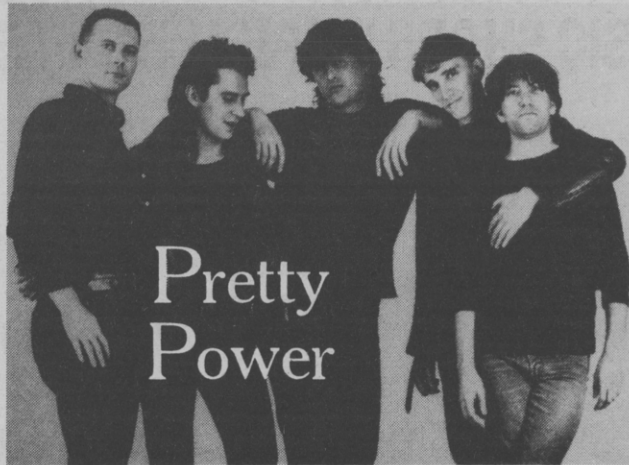
"You have, your street gangs, drug gangs, a lotta gangs that happen in California, Detroit, Chicago, areas of New York ..."

I asked Bambaataa what his message would be to gang members, including New Zealand youth:

"That they should get a knowledge of themselves or who they are, and they need to listen to this guy, out of America. Minister Louis Farrakhan Mohammed, leader of Islam. He's waking up a lot of black people's minds, and a lot of whites too, about what is happening between black and white, Muslims and Jews ... a lot of people taking his words out of context and putting all bunch of scandals, but I believe the whole world should listen to what this man is talking about."

From the early DJ days through the birth of electro funk, right up to *The Light*, Bambaataa has always been a pioneer, a true original.

And always a man with a message. **Kerry Buchanan**



**Died Pretty turned a few heads with their powerful concerts here 18 months ago. Since then they've toured Europe and America, and now they're back, with a new album *Lost* and a nationwide tour.**

The success predicted for these Australians seems to be coming true, and guitarist Brett Myers is quietly confident. "We're not up with, say, the Hoodoo Gurus yet," he says, "but we're happy."

*Lost* is an excellent sampler of Died Pretty's dynamic, diverse style. Songs range from the frenetic energy of the title track to acoustic Bats-pop; from the exquisite 'Free Dirt' to full-on epics like 'Winterland.' The band play as an ensemble, feeding off each other with no player dominating.

"Yeah, no one instrument stands out," says Myers, affable and frank. "*Lost* has less histrionic guitar than on the last one. We wanted to make the songs the more exciting part of the record, and learnt that you don't need to overplay to reach their full potential."

"Our show is a lot more confident. Having played for two years more we're just better at what we do. It's not as nerve racking playing."

Died Pretty's songs are filled with echoes of rock's strongest influences, Doors, Dylan, Iggy Pop, the Velvets; some writers have even talked of "plundering the past" ... "I think we plunder the

present more," says Myers. "No, we're not really conscious of it. We don't set out to write a Doors' song. A lot of other bands do far more. Maybe we borrow certain styles."

The band's vocalist Ronald Peno has a whine strongly reminiscent of that most uncool of current influences, Bob Dylan. In fact, the band's new single has a full-on version of his 'From a Buick Six' as a B-side. "Yes, Ron has an

empathy with Dylan's voice!" says Myers. "I don't think it's a bad thing. I've always been very aware of Dylan. I like doing songs that aren't expected of us."

The band's visit here in late '86 was the beginning of their first world tour. Things didn't start auspiciously when keyboardist Frank Brunetti broke his leg in Christchurch. "He went out walking in the middle of the night. He was hungry, it was raining, there was nowhere open. He slipped on his stackheel boots and bang went the ankle. It was no fun seeing New York on crutches."

Myers found the band fitted in with the diverse European tastes. "Every country is different," he says. "In Greece there's a heavy psychedelic revival, led by two bands, Purple Overdose and Mushroom. In France they like rock with no mucking about. We're regarded as an art band. It's a great place — the young people are in agreement with us [politically] but hassle us about Aborigines. In Holland and Germany, SST bands are the biggest thing, and heavy metal. Those are gross characterisations, just my observations."

"Italy's real crazy, the audiences are real hot-heads. It's fun — we go over the top too." Witness Pretty power near you.

**Chris Bourke**

**Shona Laing Tours U.S.**

To consolidate on the airplay 'Soviet Snow' has been receiving in North America, Shona Laing begins a month-long tour of the United States with her band this week.

The tour begins with a warm up gig in Asbury Park, New Jersey, then travels through the States until August 5, finishing at the Palladium in Los Angeles, with concerts in different cities just about every night of the tour. Some dates in Australia may be done on the way home.

In Laing's band are Dave McCartney on guitar and vocals, Paul Clayton bass and percussion, Neville Hall on sax and flute. Bud

Hooper will be drummer for half the tour, before Stan Mitchell (formerly of the Drongos) steps in. Doing sound will be Frank Gallagher, who has worked with Simple Minds and Jerry Harrison.

'Soviet Snow' entered the "Gavin Report," a radio programmer's tip-sheet, at No 35, and has been on "permanent add" on MTV for some weeks. *South* has been out for a month in the US, and has already sold many thousands of copies. 'Glad I'm Not a Kennedy' will be the next single — though it will be called 'Kennedy' over there, in case the Americans miss the point — a new video will be shot while they're in the US. CB

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