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**P.R.**  
**(Valentinos)**

The song 'Mad Mary' is based on the movie *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane* with Bette Davis. It was recorded at Harlequin in June, and in September the Valentinos were blessed with an RTC deal which saw the record on general release in late October.

The band plans to release another single, 'Sharkskin Summer' in January. They may start recording an album, and finish it over the Tasman. Yes, over the Tasman, and don't yawn.

Back to 'Mad Mary'. It was financed by RTC and the band. "That's one of the reasons why it took so long to get out," says chief vocalist Paul Robinson.

"We finally found a record company that was actually prepared to put some money behind us. They heard the tapes, liked them, and decided they'd like to become involved in local music. We were fortunate to be the ones. For the band it's an important thing, because we could have released something ourselves, and got a distribution deal, but there's not much future in that."

'Mad Mary' has stimulated interest in Oz already. Two band members will be in Sydney this month doing a bit of ground work.

"I'm optimistic. We've been through a year of hard times without much encouragement from anywhere. We stuck it out, and it seems there are a few glimmers of hope now. It's like an apprenticeship. We lasted a year in New Zealand so we should be able to last another year in Sydney."

"I don't think we'll ever be stars here, not that it's something to aim for, but if we were seriously looking at being stars in New Zealand we would have given up a long time ago. Really, it has been a year of all the guys getting to know one another. We can write songs together, we can play together, and get on under the most adverse conditions. So we're looking further afield, because like everyone else has found, whether they've gone over as the top of the heap like the Flamingos, or as just another band like the Swingers, you can only do so much here. There's three million people, and you've got a musical hierarchy which is totally out of touch with what's going on. It's a real uphill battle."

The Valentinos have built up a steady following out of Auckland, not out of choice, but of necessity. Paul explains the situation as a vicious circle. The band doesn't play in Auckland much because they have trouble getting into the bigger venues, therefore they don't make much, therefore it's uneconomic, therefore they play out of Auckland more.

"When we first got the band together, it was paramount to

us to do well in Auckland, but I don't think we have to. It isn't the whole country, sure it's the most musically aware place, apart from Christchurch, but we can survive without it.

"Auckland is probably the most trend conscious city; like the rockabilly thing. Overnight there's a group of rockabilly bands, and before that there was a Cure, Joy Division thing happening. When a band is playing it's own style, and it isn't accepted it's a pretty hard road. I can't label what we do because we just write songs and play them. There's a variety of styles and influences and we can't do covers because we never agree on what to cover, so the only alternative is to write."

On the difficulty with venues Paul comments: "It's stagnant. You've got one agency controlling a certain number of bands, and venues, and that's wrong. People acting as agents for bands shouldn't have venues as well, it's too much of a monopoly - taking ten percent from the bands, ten percent from the venues. I've been in a situation where I've been told 'you want to play our venues? Then the answer's obvious, isn't it?' I rebel against that."

"Then you have a predicament such as with the Gluepot, where you may have a covers band getting prime time, and you can't even get a foot in the door, which I think is just ridiculous."

"We don't have any illusions about Australia. It's not going to fall at our feet or anything, it's a matter of taking it step by step. As far as agents go, we'll suss out who we think is genuinely interested, because plenty would probably be quite happy to have you on their books, but there's got to be an effort behind that. Sincerity may be an idealistic criteria, but it's the old maxim - when you believe in a product, it's that much easier to sell."

AnnLouise Martin

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