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Mockers with backs to the wall; (L-R) Dean, Andrew, Gordon, Geoff, Steve.



## Taking the Long Way The Mockers Story

Now take the Mockers — they're a strange case. They formed in Wellington about the same time the Meemees were getting started in Auckland. Their first single, 'Good Old Days', sold a healthy 800 copies, mostly by mail order and prospects looked good.

But while the Mockers stayed in Wellington the world seemed to pass them by. The Meemees had record success, even a number one single and recorded an album. The Mockers put out singles that were at least as good and for various reasons, couldn't even get them in the charts. So the Mockers decided last year to head for Auckland.

Wherein lies another unusual situation. Around that time the band underwent a major purge that left singer, Andrew Fagan, as the only original member still performing live. Now that band has in turn been shed, with the co-opting of a new rhythm section and guitarist.

But the oddest thing about the band is that one of its two integral members, Gary Curtis, doesn't play live with the band. In fact he's not even in the same city most of

the time. He stays in Wellington and writes songs for the band. Curtis was the band's original bass player but left with the first reshuffle.

"He doesn't enjoy playing live, he just likes writing songs," Fagan explains. "And he does that really well, I think. He can direct all his time to doing that and he's got a stable environment to work in."

"Gary's still a major part of the band. For the last studio recording, he was there with the piano and he had lots of ideas. He's quite critical. Being outside the band, he can see things we can't."

But there must be problems with the band depending so much on someone hundreds of miles away?

"Yeah, I think we'll be spending quite a bit of time in Wellington. It's just liaison to get the songs in with the band, incorporating Gary's ideas, that's difficult."

That's always been a problem for the Mockers, the gap between the songs in the studio with Gary and the way they were played live, hasn't it?

"The thing is in the studio, unlike a lot of bands, we go in there with the aim of making the record as well as possible, regardless of the live playing situation."

"With the original line-up we were naturally limited because we just had a bass player, Gary, who played keyboards on stage, plus guitar and drums. We were limited musically. Then with the last

line-up, all the instruments were there, but I don't think it was quite the right combination of people. They didn't have a feel for the songs?

"Exactly."

Fagan is confident, after initial practices, that the new line-up, featuring former Dabs bassist Geoff Hayden and drummer Steve and guitarist Dean Hazelwood who was plucked from Taumarunui to stardom, will finally be the right one. He and keyboardist Gordon Costello, remain from the previous live line-up.

The new band will be playing in mid-June, just in time for the release of the new single 'Cleopatra/After the Rain'. Fagan considers the single is another example of the variety of styles encompassed by Mocker music. The flip side — which *Radio With Pictures* chose to make a video for — was

written by Fagan and features a drum machine, layered keyboards and only a hint of guitar.

Reports from this year's MIDEM trade fair indicated that the Mockers' records stirred interest among overseas buyers. One of the main reasons they signed recently to the Mandrill Studios' label Reaction Records was that being with a New Zealand company they are free to negotiate separate deals with any country they wish — unlike this country's Mushroom signings, who are virtually obliged to work via Australia.

"Given what's happened at MIDEM, the initial step should be anywhere in the world that shows interest — not necessarily Australia."

But won't the problem of the band's separation from Gary be magnified if the band has to head overseas?

"To a certain extent, yes. We've talked about it. On the recording front, it's an argument for being New Zealand-based. Recording is cheap here and we've got all the facilities. It's a lot cheaper to bring a producer over here than do it over there."

But that's all a little way off as yet. For the near future, the band will tour and if things go well, begin work on an album. You almost have to wish Andrew Fagan success on the strength of his perseverance alone.

And hey! Why not wind up with a hackneyed old hack question. Tell me, Andrew, can you see that your music is moving in any particular direction?

"Umm, I've said this once before and it sounded really ... (laughs). Our music appears directionless ... but that's our predetermined direction. It's true!"  
Russell Brown

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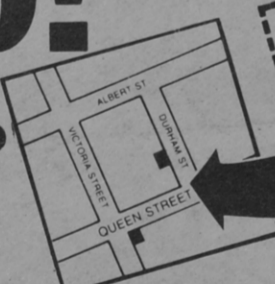
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