

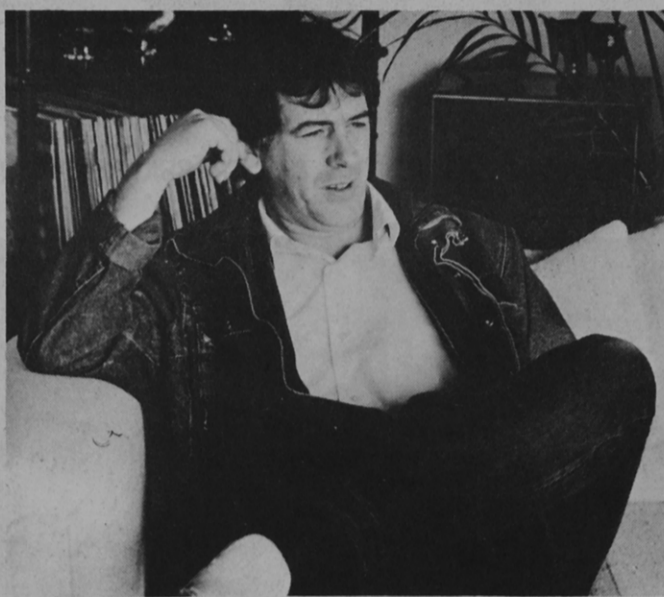
Whispers and Shouts

It's time for a rethink on Hammond Gamble. It's been three years since he appeared in these pages and that's a long time between drinks. Movements have come and gone in that time, and it's all been rather confusing. But Hammond Gamble? Easy — he's a ...

Then you struggle for a label. You were going to say blues guitarist, but he's more of a singer now, isn't he? There was that *Telethon* tune, with Hammond in your living room, pleading for a helping hand night after night. Yes, the new Rhonda, you say cynically.

But just when you've slotted him beside Rob Guest, you notice he's back in front of a rock band once again, filling the dance floors of the country.

This is all very unfair. Labels are for the 'flavour-of-the-month'. Hammond Gamble is a musician, pure but not simple. As his new solo album shows, our inability to pigeon-hole him is because his talents are so varied.



Gamble, having just completed a tour with his new band, is aware of the problems the variety in his songs create:

"The new album (*Every Whisper Shouts*) is very diverse, perhaps at its own expense. But they're all my songs. Everything I write has a sad sentiment to it, because that's where my strength lies, but there's as much feeling in the rockier tunes as the slow ballads."

Despite the risk of emptying the dance floor, the ballads are

part of the new Hammond Gamble show.

"People throw away ballads probably because we're brought up on Des O'Connor and wimps like that. When people are out at pubs they want to rock. What are you supposed to do? Not do the ballads because people like rock'n'roll?"

On this album, recorded with top musicians Frank Gibson Jr and Bruce Lynch on drums and bass, and Mike Walker on piano, we hear many sides of Gamble's music. Of course, there are the blues-based rock tunes that *Street Talk* is remembered for, but there are also several examples of the more mature Hammond Gamble in slow, soulful ballads.

At first, the album's variety is disconcerting but once you've found your bearings, you begin to welcome the changes and comprehend the continuity — a gradual build-up towards the especially strong second side.

The ballads are interspersed between the upbeat blues-rock tunes, and the standout is a quiet number, 'Whole Lot of Magic', produced by Bruce Lynch, with a refreshing use of acoustic guitar and saxophone. All the other songs were written in the past year, but Hammond wrote 'Whole Lot of Magic' at 19.

"I used to do Saturday afternoons at the Windsor with Dave McCartney and Graham Brazier back in 1974 and they'd do the harmonies in the chorus. They'd just started Hello Sailor and we sometimes joined together on 'Dear Doctor'."

'Midnight', the single off the album, has an uncluttered sound and an unusual synthesized bass line. Gamble explains:

"Bruce cut his finger, and he kept bleeding, so he did it on the keyboards. There aren't too many tracks used on that one, but neither are there on (sings) 'every breath you take ...' Maybe it'll be a hit! (Laughs.)"

Gamble is a great admirer of the talents of Bruce Lynch, whose abilities as arranger are used to powerful effect on ballads such as 'Anna' and 'If You've Got Love' — the song which Joe Cocker is to cover on his new album. The orchestra of strings and horns is actually an Emulator — a keyboard synthesizer which uses the natural sounds of traditional instruments recorded on floppy discs.

The arrangements are often witty, with baroque organ on 'Grey Hills', and a funky jazz fade-out on 'Girls In My Room'. "With 'Grey Hills'," Gamble explains, "I said to Bruce Lynch I wanted Elizabethan organ. Though it might sound like it doesn't belong, if you look at the lyrics they're almost religious in their content and that's why I wanted that churchy sound."

But fans of Hammond Gamble after the *Street Talk* sound will be satisfied with the punchy blues rock of 'Big City Blues' and 'Young Girl', with overdubbed guitars wailing against boogie piano from Mike Walker.

Blues remains at the heart of Gamble's music, in all his styles of songwriting. But these are lean times for emotion. He was shocked to see a childhood idol, Ray Charles, on TV recently:

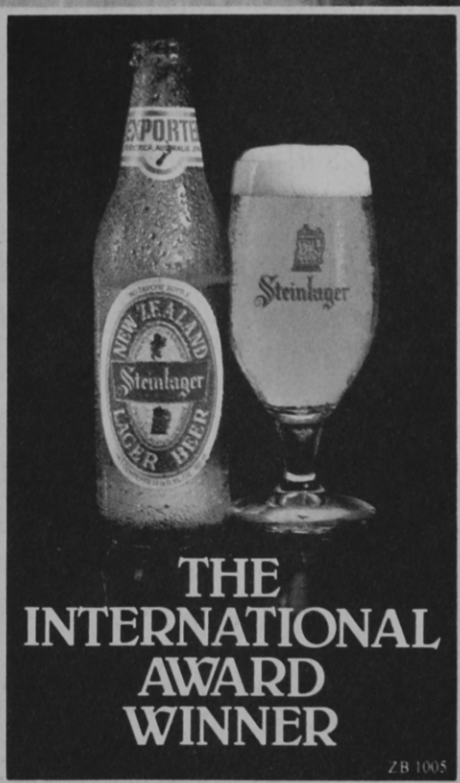
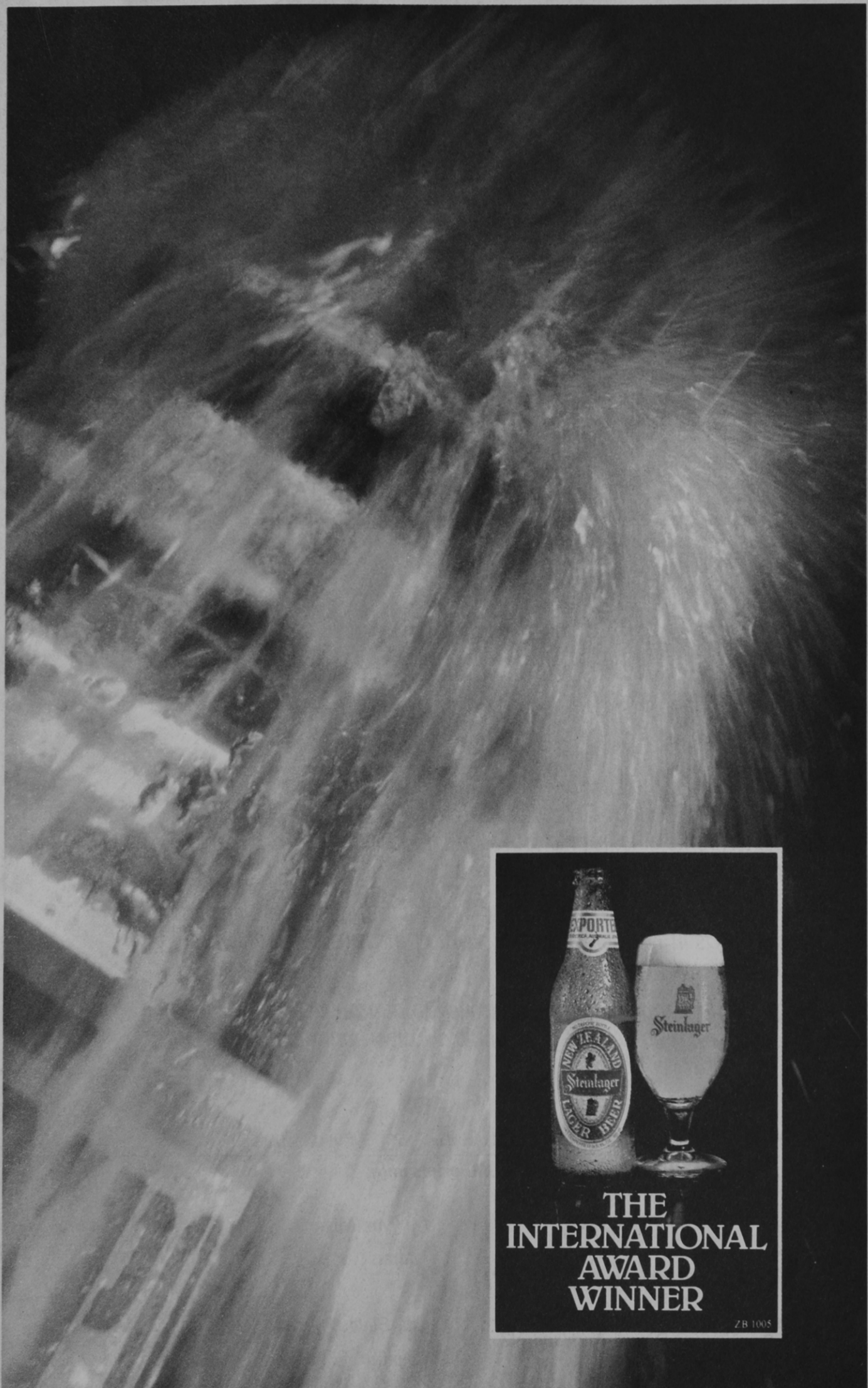
"All I ever wanted was a woman who could make love in 3/4 time. Bloody hell! It hurt me to see him singing it, because the melody is a Kenny Rogers rip off, with all the R&B talk like 'hey man!' and 'yeah!' thrown in. Talk about sales pitch — it's murder."

Joe Cocker parallels him. His voice may be shot — mine certainly is — but take a song like 'Guilty', one of my favourites. Listen to the sentiment in that. The guy's got emotion."

Gamble gets worked up: "These wet-behind-the-ears twits like Spandau Ballet doing (sings as low as possible, pulling faces) 'I know this much is true. Da dada daah ...' All that stuff. People think it's cosmic. Do you know what it is? It's 'ermans' 'ermits all over again. A rip off: pathetic tunes, wimpy nowhere-ness."

"This album is diverse, but I have no regrets. I put a lot of time into writing it, and if people don't like it and think they can do better, good on them."

Chris Bourke



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Iain and Ben



Musicians' Own Indie

Unsung Records is one year and two months old. It's just received its first fan letter. The label's catalogue has just doubled in size and while the future is being pondered realistically there's still enough energetic idealism to go round.

Unsung started with 10 people and a lot of big plans. The independent co-operative record label idea had been kicked round for a while but wasn't acted upon until people connected with the Big Sideways project found if they wanted to put an album out they had to do it themselves. Robbie Sinclair's *Three Voices* album was recorded and awaiting release so two albums came out at once and Unsung was here.

"Unsung was very untogether at first and that was rather costly," says foundation member Iain Watkins. "Everyone had different areas to look after and lack of communication led to some things being done which cost us thousands of dollars. We've made lots of mistakes. Like we just found out a few weeks ago that you have to apply for a chart

position, a record doesn't automatically chart. We were wondering why the Big Sideways record was selling well, but not in the Top 40. That was why."

Unsung is now down to five key personnel. Iain says people's individual projects got bigger, no one worked at the label for money and people just drifted away. Now the initial expenses have been paid off and business is on a firmer footing. A sympathetic lawyer is handling a lot of the paper work free of charge.

Despite a year-and-a-bit of changes the aim of Unsung remains the same.

"To stimulate and activate the New Zealand independent music, within New Zealand and hopefully overseas," says member Ben Staples. "We're the only record company run by artists and we give musicians complete control from the music to the cover art."

"If we like what someone brings in," says Iain, "We'll release it without any interference at all. We tell a band with a raw demo to go away and get it done and then bring us back the master. Until that day we don't hear it again. And we're getting a great response, CONTINUED ON PAGE 34"