

## Life in the Church of Romanticism

"You're in the Church, aren't you?"

Me? No, I'm just going to write about them. Really.

"Come on, you sound Australian. You are, aren't you?"

Sound Australian? Me? "I'd like to shake your hand!"

Look, I can't even play guitar ...

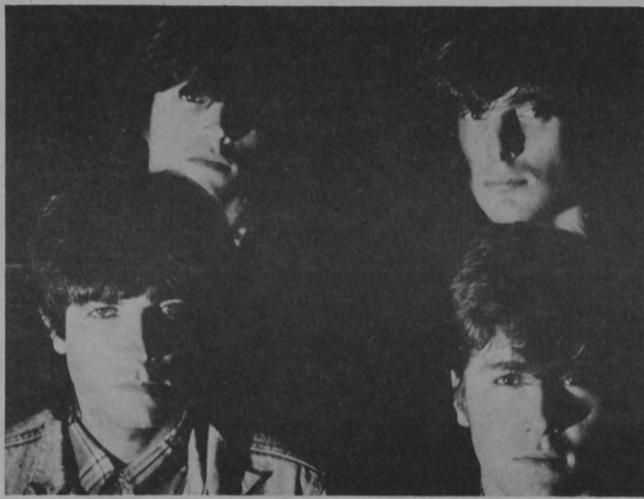
I suppose that means the Church are pop stars. Steve Kilbey doesn't really want to be a pop star. Well, he wouldn't admit to it if he did.

The songs he has written for the Church's new album, *Seance* might be pop songs but they aren't. Some people might say they were depressing.

"I think the title put a lot of people off, which I sort of realised would happen at the time. A lot of people came up to me and said: 'You don't know what you're doing, you don't want to meddle with things'. I think the cover, the name of the band, the title, the video for 'It's No Reason' all added up to something that could be construed as depressing."

Can you understand why people would think that way?

"I can understand why someone whose idea of a good time is watching American cop shows or going to see movies like *E.T.* or getting drunk every night would think that. But I don't think *Seance* is so much depressing as they couldn't be bothered about it.



They don't deal in those kinds of emotions.

"Whether its misplaced or misguided or I didn't achieve it, the album is dealing with very personal, delicate kinds of things. A lot of people would rather hear 'Get down and boogie, feel alright in the city, gonna have a good time', because that's their life.

"I know people like that, they go from relationship to relationship without ever thinking about it. Things that happen outside their own personal world of consuming and gratifying themselves have no significance. There are a lot of people like that and I can see why an album like *Seance* is totally unfashionable.

"But I don't think it's depressing. It's slightly sad but it's not depressing."

Is there happiness on it?

"Happiness? No, there isn't really, is there. But I don't think I've ever written a happy song in my life. 'Electric Lash' is the closest to happiness but even that's got a sort of sneer which I can't work out. In fact, I've written all these new songs and every one seems to have this nasty edge to it. Well, not nasty, but it seems very difficult for me to write things that are really straight and positive."

Does that reflect your outlook

on life?

"Probably, yeah. You see, I think happiness is a really obvious emotion. I think there are so many areas to explore in sadness and I think music is a very good medium for expressing sadness. That's what the album's really all about and I hope some people would have connected with some of it and enjoyed it."

The Zephyr's courtesy light briefly silhouettes the *I've Seen E.T.* sticker in the back window.

There's a good crowd at the DB Mount Maunganui, people are quite excited. It's a long time since a late licence was granted in these parts.

They Were Expendable began cautiously; the more adventurous dance. As the performance continues, more people begin to react. It's a good gig for the Expendables and when they're good they can be very good. There was plenty for the crowd to relate to, especially in the way Jay cast her personality, but how would Not Really Anything go down? No worries. Their music may be loud but it's a lot of fun too. They play tremendously, like the psychedelic rowdies they are.

So much for the support acts, how about the main event?

The Church live have come a long way. There's a rapport on stage that wasn't there the last time they visited these shores.

The live show has also begun to take on its own identity - it verged on the faceless on occasion last time. That identity teeters perilously close to hard rock at times (not that the crowd minded that) and it has its truly tedious moments but there's an infectious sweep to it that makes it worthwhile.

The addition of keyboards has filled out the sound but the excitement still lies in the jangle of guitars. It's heartwarming to see and hear Marty Wilson-Piper flail at his succession of guitars looking for sounds rather than notes or chords - the closing 'Travel By Thought' was the culmination of that. Both in Mt Maunganui and Auckland (a better performance) it was a chaotic, noisy, joyful and ... yes, psychedelic workout. The other standout was, surprisingly, 'It's No Reason', also from *Seance*. A dreamy production number on record it's carried by Kilbey's melody line.

I don't think anyone would have claimed the Church were the best band they'd ever seen but at their best they were worth the ticket price.

Kilbey doesn't enjoy playing live all that often. But surely there's an interest in the way the music changes on stage?

"You mean more rough and ready? That's just something that happens. I mean, I don't know how much people realise you've got no control. On a particular night you go on and you find out how it's going to sound. Not just with regards to soundchecks and that sort of thing but if Richard (Ploog, the drummer) is drunk or something the whole thing will be faster and more sloppy and aggressive. If someone's had an argument with their wife or something it's more subdued. Every night's different and it's really hard to have any control over what's going on. In the studio you have control but live it's more or less

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



## Facts of REAL Life

You've got to hand it to Real Life - they're no mugs.

They waited and waited for the right record contract to come along. When it came, they wrote a song expressly as a single. That single, 'Send Me An Angel' went Top Five in their native Australia and all the way to Number One here.

They got together with the Rich Kids film company and planned out an impressive video for the song. It was decided the band should adopt a "winter look" for the clip, with warm wool and leather jackets.

"It's important for a band to have something you can identify with," says drummer Danny Simcic, who replaced a drum machine in the band early last year.

"We're not one of those bands without an image," he explains.

Real Life now work with Sydney fashion designer Katie Pye who has been furnishing them with new outfits.

"Our look will keep changing all

the time, like it should, to keep people mystified. That's important - we are a dance band, a fashion dance band. It all fits into a format so it's not like, real extreme."

The band has just finished recording its debut LP, *Heartland*. The album was produced by Steve Hillage (Simple Minds' producer). The album features both the band's singles, 'Angel' (in a remixed version) and 'Open Hearted'.

Simcic describes it as basically an album of up-tempo rock songs - "a mixture of the hard edge and softer ballads."

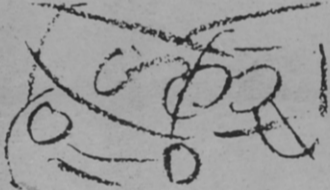
"It's not an Australian sound, it's a very international sound." In keeping with that, Real Life will have records released in both the UK and the USA before the year is out. The British release of 'Angel' has been brought forward because the powers that be think it might be a good Christmas single. Angels - Christmas, see?

All this for a band that recently played its first gig outside Australia supporting DD Smash at Carlaw Park recently. It might turn the heads of some bands, but not Real Life. I have a feeling they'll handle success very capably.

Russell Brown

### 'DANCE EXPONENTS' FROM PAGE 12

try's touring acts feel obliged to impose. The Exponents are pop stars, not rock stars - there's a difference.



When the Dance Exponents' Australian venture had to be aborted because of citizenship problems there were whispers that this would be the end of the band, they'd split disillusioned and broke. Not so.

"It was a good holiday," grins Jordan Luck. Luck was the band member who was forced to come back to New Zealand after it was discovered he was unable to work in Australia because he was Canadian by birth. British-born Brian Jones didn't even make it across the Tasman. But the rest of the band had a good time, saw a lot of bands, got the feel of Australia. "We probably would have spent the money, lost it touring or something anyway."

Now they're back here to promote their debut album, *Prayers Be Answered*. The album was recorded at Auckland's Mandrill Studios with expatriate Kiwi Dave Marrett.

So how did you enjoy recording your first album?

"It was good and bad," says Brian. "I didn't like the producer as a person. We didn't get on with him."

"Without meaning to be insulting, he's the sort of producer who would have suited the Narcs to a tee," continues Michael 'Harry' Haralambi. "He's into keyboards and raunchy guitars."

"He wanted everything to be very straight, verse-chorus songs. Any sort of difference we had, he tried to take out," says Brian. "We ended up with about a 50/50 say in what happened. It won't be that way next time."

But they're still happy with the album. They like the songs and those are what counts, even if the final product is "a little tame." The only problem is, they have a whole lot more songs they'd like to record as well. The band has performed more than 60 of Jordan's songs live over the two and a bit years of its existence.

"We're in a tough situation because we mucked around doing the album (ironically the delay was mainly due to a search for a suitable producer) and now we've got this big backlog of songs," Jordan explains.

There will be even more songs to choose from now that new guitarist Chris Sheehan has begun to contribute his own ideas for songs, on top of Jordan's prolific output.

"If there's a song we don't like it just gets booted out," Jordan explains. "Those are the ones that are dirgey and have no melody ..."

"We're going to give them to Auckland Walk," grins Dave.

"And then Auckland Walk can give their songs to Roco Coca," rejoins Chris. Laughter.

The Dance Exponents have been somewhat stranded between this country's two musical camps - the "industry" and "alternative" scenes. It's something they acknowledge.

"We haven't proved ourselves to the Legionnaires-type crowd, we're probably not old enough, and with the other crowd we've lost credibility because we had quick success," Dave Gent explains.

"Any young band that's successful in the charts in the next 15-16 months will be in the same boat as us," Jordan continues.

"But it's no bad thing. We could play a boot boy night at the Gladstone and get away without having bottles thrown at us and we could play the Hillsborough with the Legionnaires. If the Legionnaires played at the Gladstone they'd get arseholes and Evasive Action couldn't play, say, before DD Smash at Mainstreet. Some rugby club type would hassle them."

And you haven't won over the high-fashion dance crowd either.

Brian: "No, we're not a fashion band."

"Maybe we should go funk!" David grins.

"Well you're black, we've got a head start!"

"The thing is, it doesn't really matter that the album's taken so long to come out because we're not a fashion band so the songs won't be out

of date with the current trend," says Chris.

After this tour the Exponents would like to get out of pubs. They're sick of drunken, occasionally violent, punters and they want to play to the people who want to hear them - young people. They'll be heading overseas early next year - Australia again, but the idea of going to Japan now has some lure.

They're very confident about staying together and cracking it in the big wide world. What would it take for the band to break up?

Jordan: "I think, if we achieved what we wanted. And we'd then say, 'Let's call it a day lads'."

Harry: "None of us ever want to work at a normal job again. I'm not going to."

"We've got a goal which I think is much higher than most New Zealand bands and I think we can achieve it sooner or later because of the strength of our material," Dave continues. "Most bands here have a goal of not having to set up their own gear and getting pissed every night around New Zealand, whereas we've got enough confidence in our material to think that we can make it big overseas and we'll keep going until we do."

Brian: "And if Australia doesn't work out this time we'll just go somewhere else and try again. If we get to the stage where we're all about 50 and we haven't cracked it we might say, 'Let's call it a day. At least we've had a good time and we've seen the world'."

Russell Brown

# SPLIT ENZ

new album  
New Zealand tour  
coming soon