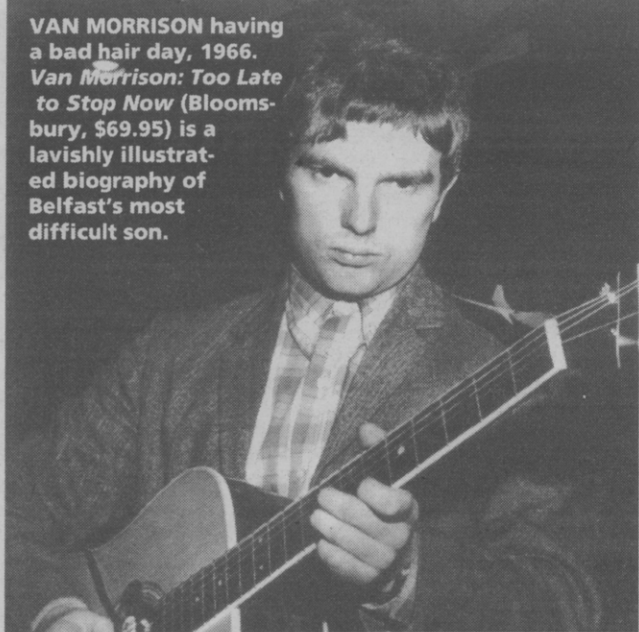


**VAN MORRISON** having a bad hair day, 1966. *Van Morrison: Too Late to Stop Now* (Bloomsbury, \$69.95) is a lavishly illustrated biography of Belfast's most difficult son.



The picture research is superb, particularly for Morrison's early days in seminal Irish R&B band Them, and in the late 60s hippie phase with his flower-child wife, the wonderfully named Janet Planet who inspired 'Ballerina' and other songs off the classic *Astral Weeks*. Author Steve Turner has done his leg-work, tracking down old colleagues and archival memorabilia to flesh out the life-story of a man who, as an interview subject, rivals Harpo Marx for inarticulateness. But as the book enters the 80s, and Morrison's endless search for gurus, methods and teachers, Turner leans too heavily on lyric analysis and his only interview with Morrison (for his book about rock music and religion). As Morrison has said, "It's the music that matters. All the rest is a distraction."

CHRIS BOURKE

#### RUMOURS NEW PLYMOUTH

The final curtain went down on **Tension** and **Cleopatra Grip** after their last gig in December while **Warp Spasm** have called it a day with band members leaving town... Peggy Gordon's Celtic Bar is continuing to throng with young and old looking for that Irish/Scottish taste. **Spiddoolin** (a band from Ireland) played there recently... the successful bad publicity machine continues for **Nefarious** and the **Goat Fucking Nun Rapers** (GNFR). In a recent gig with Tauranga's **Man With a Dog** the already banned GNFR gained access to the venue after deceiving the manager by posing as another band. Naked GNFR guitarist Nigel Toxic in GG Allin form smashed, slashed and bashed his way through a set, resorting to animal-like obscenities resulting in indecency complaints to the District Council. On the same night a Nefarious member did \$500 worth of damage to the venue's kitchen... Mountain Rockers were let down when **Sticky Filth** were unable to play apparently due to electricity generation problems. They played to over 300 at Section VIII recently... Nefarious are recording their third album, the **Nod** are also recording... after a four year wait, the **Toxic Avengers** album *Full Moon Over Mushroom Town* has been released to coincide with the anniversary of the violent 1990 death of the band's guitarist Colin Long. Available from IMA HITT, PO Box 407, New Plymouth... **Kitsch** are an impressive new band around town... the **Verlaines** played to 45 after numbers forced them to cancel on their last visit but support **King Loser** stole the show... as the town warms up for **Jethro Tull**'s only New Zealand concert, promoters the Magog Motorcycle Club have announced a one-off New Zealand concert for **Procol Harum** in New Plymouth on May 21... Rumours Nightclub in Hawera is making a name for itself as a venue. Ima Hitt are currently touring Italian/Australian band **Yage** and will be touring Americans **All** (formerly the Descendants) in March... **Jimmy Barnes**' Bowl of Brooklands gig with the **Bad Loves** and the **Headless Chickens** on Mountain Rock weekend was anything but successful... the Fitzroy Tavern has become a venue for larger New Zealand touring bands, filling the gap left by the Westown Hotel... **Funky Good Friday** is the name of a groovy hip-hop, acid jazz night scheduled for the old Mayfair Theatre on Good Friday featuring around three bands from Auckland.

PATRICK FIFE

# hardware

#### Marshall Dynamic Bass Amps

All new 400W bass amp from Marshall features a revolutionary new power stage with increased headroom. This new technology gives a RMS to peak ratio of 1:10 as opposed to 1:2 found in most amplifiers. This means a peak power output of 4000W!!! Other features include valve and solid state preamp, variable compression and 9 band graphic EQ. Specially designed cabinets are available in 4x10", 4x12" and 2x15" configurations. Distributed by Electric Factory (NZ) Ltd.

#### Alesis Monitor One Reference Speakers

From Alesis, the leaders in affordable professional studio electronics, comes the Monitor One nearfield studio reference monitors. The Monitor Ones feature a proprietary 6.5" low frequency driver and the Alesis exclusive Superport™ speaker venting technology, which results in solid high-power bass transients and low frequency response extended beyond that of comparable nearfield monitors. The 1" silk-dome high frequency driver is ferrofluid cooled and fed by a crossover network at 2500 Hz. Frequency response: 45Hz - 18 kHz. Power handling: 100W RMS @ 4 ohms (200W Peak). RRP \$1399.00 pair. Distributed by Electric Factory (NZ) Ltd.

#### Zildjian 'Z' Custom Crashes

In the same vein as the award winning 'A' Custom cymbals, the new 'Z' Custom crashes feature Zildjian's secret alloy and computer controlled hammering techniques. Available in Rock & Medium weights in 16", 17", 18" and 19" the 'Z' Customs are a super powerful rock oriented cymbal with extra volume, brightness, cutting power and durability. Designed for "loud, raw, powerful music". Distributed by Electric Factory (NZ) Ltd.

#### Bridge System

Bridge System Corporation was established in September 1993 and awarded the Australia/ New Zealand distribution of Washburn guitars, Soundtech sound reinforcement and Panoramic professional mixing consoles. The company's commitment to the promotion and support of these products has resulted in the February masterclasses of Guitar virtuoso Michael Angelo. Mr Angelo is the inventor and only player of a custom "V" neck left AND right handed guitar! Michael's impressive qualifications also include a BA in music theory.

Rumoured to be the first of many international Washburn artists to tour New Zealand in the next eighteen months these instructional masterclasses should provide invaluable tuition in all aspects of Electric AND acoustic guitar technique.

For further details contact Michael Jago at Bridge System 09 419 0660

#### MACKIE DESIGNS

At this year's winter Namm show in Anaheim, California, Mackie Designs received two major awards. They received the music and sound retailer most innovative mixer of the year award and the most innovative product of the year award for their 8 bus consoles. Charlie Stringers Snarling Dogs guitar and bass strings will soon be available in New Zealand. These strings will see at very affordable prices, the bass strings being made to Rotosound specs, but retailing for \$39.95. Available also will be Charlie Stringers unplugged acoustic guitar strings. These are phosphor bronze strings, and will be sold in three gauges. "Really Lite", .01 to .047, "Acoustic Lite" .012 to .054 and "Lites Out" .013 to .056. All Charlie Strings are made in the USA.

#### EAR PROTECTION

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# Live

#### JOHNNY CASH Town Hall, February 14

A polite, all-seated show for grown-ups is quite a strange thing if you've never been to one before. A predominantly middle-aged crowd (ie people who could afford the \$50 tickets) filed in in an orderly manner then the guy behind me offered to do mortal violence to the person who mistakenly had his seat if he didn't get the fuck out of it NOW. A disembodied American voice welcomed everyone to "the Johnny Cash Show" then, once escape was impossible, informed us that we were about to be subjected to the Warratahs. I don't really know what there is to say about them: they played original songs with strong melodies and obviously enjoyed themselves, but I just find those twangy country harmonies, cheerful piano accordion fills and mildly plaintive fiddle parts intolerably good-natured, the musical equivalent of a big toothless grin on the face of an imbecile. And never, ever before have I seen a support act spotlight and introduce the band members one by one.

When Johnny Cash's band came on and started playing an extended instrumental version of 'I Walk the Line' the difference between straight country and whatever it is they do was unmistakable. The

line-up was stand-up bass, electric guitar, piano and drums, and the players have apparently been with Cash since the 50s when his music was regarded less as country than as grim, slowed-down rockabilly and as such, a potential menace to society. They played a selection of hits that may have struck longtime fans as predictable but were just fine for the rest of us, including 'Folsom Prison Blues', 'Ring of Fire', 'Cry Cry Cry', 'Don't Take Your Guns To Town', 'Ghost Riders' and 'I Walk the Line'. Then three tracks from the new Rick Rubin produced solo acoustic album, one about the singer's dissolute past, one about God and a dead slow version of Cohen's 'Bird On A Wire', a song perfectly suited to Cash's beautiful voice and taste for ultra-sparse arrangements.

After that June Carter came on and sang 'Jackson' with her husband which was all very well. But her next trick was an excruciating stand-up comedy routine in which she actually resorted to Dolly Parton jokes, and then she invited the entire Carter family (excluding Shayne) on stage to sing about a hundred songs their mother taught them, all

of which revolved around insufferably hearty four part harmonies and second helpings of down-home family values. Finally Johnny returned to sing some spirituals with the family, and in a particularly bizarre moment, to introduce us to his personal travelling evangelist, who was offering free advice to anyone with "a drug or alcohol related problem."

And so after a few more songs without the plague of Carters, including 'Drunken Ira Hayes' and one by "my little Irish rock band U2", the man in black and purple vanished into the night, the house lights came up and the crowd disappeared into the Civic underground car park and home to New Lynn or Glenfield or Howick or Ponsonby.

MATTHEW HYLAND

#### ROBBEN FORD AND THE BLUE LINE

##### Powerstation, Feb 6

Robben Ford's been here once before — as part of David Sanborn's sextet a year or so ago. This time it was as leader of the thinking man's power trio (and the audience was very largely men. Guitar heroism still seems a decidedly male pursuit). Ford, bassist Roscoe Beck and drummer Tom Brechtlien were obviously using this tour to promote their latest album *Mystic Mile* as all but a few numbers in the 90 minute set were taken from it. And while this undoubtedly made good marketing sense it did deny the audience the wider variety of styles to be found on the Blue Line's debut album.

So it was an evening centred on a hard attack of the blues. Yet on the rare occasions when they played quietly — such as the new disc's title number or 'Worried Life Blues' - the audience was every bit as awed by the stunning musicianship. Ford's subtle use of the volume pedal — creating a range of sounds from gentle weeping to eerie wailing — was a particular treat.

As well as being a masterful guitarist Robben Ford is a good singer. However, most of his lyrics were only semi-decipherable through the volume and lack of clarity in the mix. Similarly the full intricacies of Roscoe Beck's astounding basswork were sometimes easier to see than to hear. Drummer Brechtlien had no such problem with nine microphones on his kit. The arrival of Georgie Fame on stage for a couple of numbers was an unexpected bonus, especially to hear him on such interesting Ford rearrangements of old standards (Howlin' Wolf and Ray Charles).

All in all a very satisfying night out, although with a better sound mix and a little more variety from the Blue Line's repertoire it would have been even better.

PETER THOMSON

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