

Whatever Sounds Good

Spiderbait



“Sometimes you just want to say, ‘Fuck all that,’ and just lock yourself in a studio, put out records and not tour, just do what the Beatles did. Well, maybe small tours to nice places.”

‘All that’ refers to the music business, and the individual with the idealistic view of participating in it is Whit (no last name), guitarist for Spiderbait, three pieces of Australian power-pop with fruity album titles and enough energy to stop a speeding Holden in its tracks, even one with roo bars.

Starting in the small rural town of Finley in New South Wales, where they could, “play the first 20 seconds of about 50 songs, because that’s all we knew,” Whit, bassist Janet, and drummer Kram progressed through the Melbourne pub scene to the point where they are now one of the biggest live acts in Australia. In spite of this success they haven’t forgotten their roots, as evidenced by the title of their new album, *Ivy and the Big Apples*.

“We were rehearsing in Finley in June last year around at Janet’s place. She brought the local newspaper around and it had on the front page this big picture of a woman called Ivy Matheson. It was just her holding this huge apple in her hand, and it was this really simple story of how she’d picked this apple off her tree and it was the biggest apple she’d ever grown. It was just really funny looking at the picture on the front page of the paper and thinking, ‘This is the town where we grew up.’”

The album, Spiderbait’s third, combines all out thrashing guitars with moments of absolute vocal cuteness (courtesy of Janet), Kram’s Billy Corganesque bellowing, and even a couple of excursions into dance beats thanks to Whit “really getting into a lot of rap and some techno stuff as well”.

But how did Kram feel about being shunted aside in favour of a drum machine?

“Kram’s an awesome drummer but he’s more attached to his singing than his drumming. He plays guitar as well and a bit of piano. If it sounds good then fine, no worries. And it would be the same if we did a song that didn’t have a guitar in it. Whatever sounds good.”

Whit doesn’t see any problem with the band mixing up their recorded output, as he thinks the public’s musical taste is nowhere near as pigeon-holed as in the past.

“It’s not like, ‘I only like grunge,’ or, ‘I only like hardcore,’ or, ‘I only like techno,’ it seems like if it’s good it’s good. If it’s good people will be into it.”

“We’ve really concentrated on variation and keeping it all interesting. Just thinking about the next record, it’s a great feeling knowing you’re not stuck in a genre. If we write something we like that is completely like nothing we’ve done before, that’s completely fine. The sky’s the limit as far as our options or what we’re inspired by.”

Like any successful guitar band, Spiderbait have done their fair share of touring, going as far afield as Canada and the States. For many musos a life on the road makes maintaining a home base difficult. Whit solves this problem by living, “in my van at the moment. Because we’re away so much with the band, half the time paying rent is just a waste of money basically. So, I just bought this old Telecom van and decked it all out myself, put in beds and cupboards and a sink. It’s really good. Everything’s really simple. Everything you need is in the van — climbing gear and food, four track and guitar. So, any time I’m home I just go camping or go on trips.”

Finally a question that I know is burning in the minds of many of my closet acquaintances. What

does he know about koalas and syphilis?

“What’s that?”

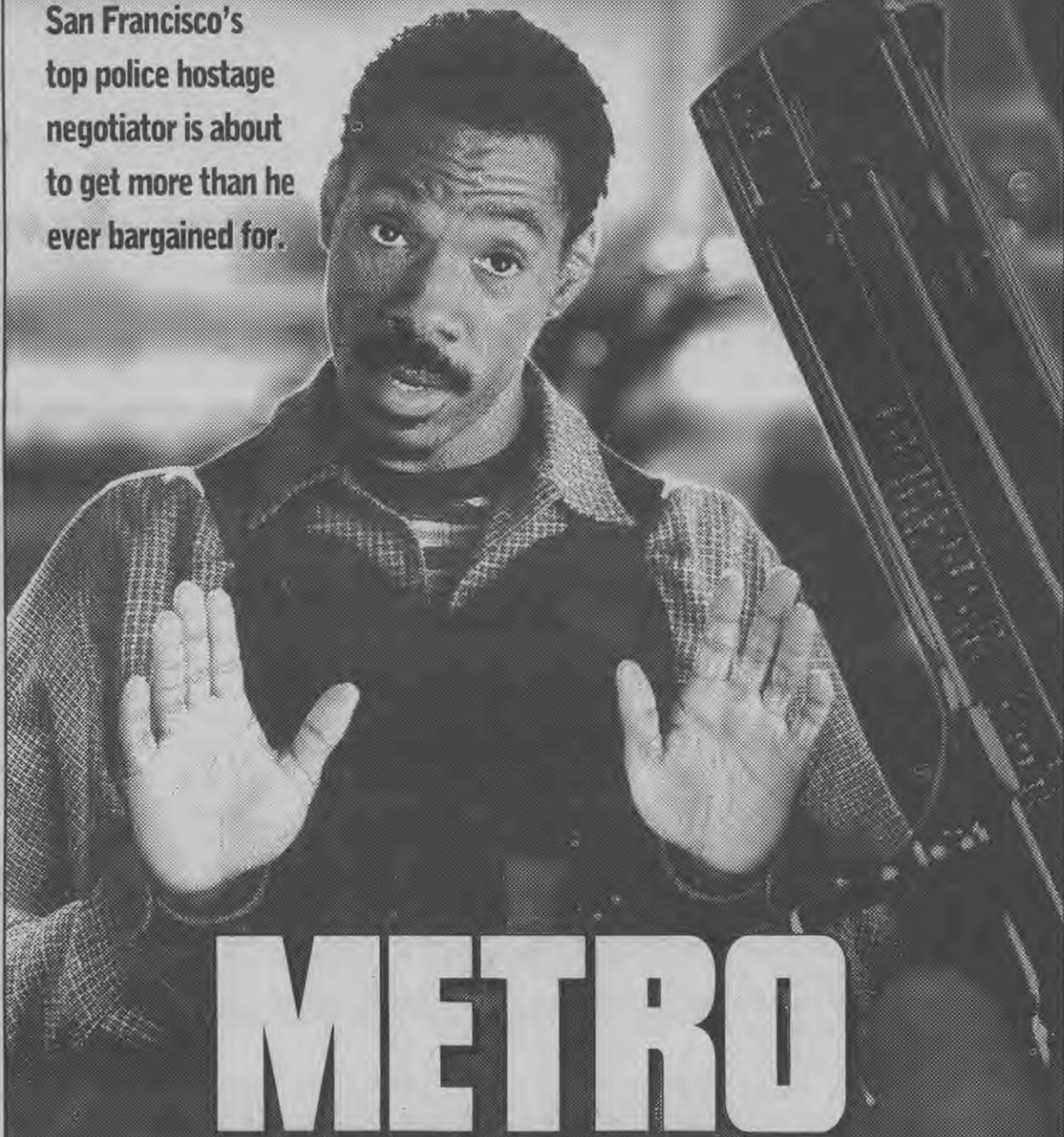
Apparently in Australia koalas have been getting the disease.

“None of the koalas I know!”

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