

Second Child

From grubby Rising Sun stalwarts to Wildside's latest signing, Second Child have come up trumps, even though their brand of granite-like rock (no roll) has put them out on a limb in Auckland.

Like Honeylove — their polar opposite musically — they don't really fit into the any of the local scenes. Too hardcore for Flying Nun, too punk for heavy metal fans, you can't dance to them, they don't do grunge — it's like they have the heaviness of a speed metal band, minus the speed.

Still, so far they've managed to clock up one track on the *Freak The Sheep NZ* music compilation and their debut seven-track mini-album *Magnet* is out next month. Originally scheduled for release through Ima Hitt, the boys switched to Wildside at the eleventh hour, which means they won't have to do in-store gigs in New Plymouth after all.

Fresh back from a North Island tour with the Hallelujah Picassos, Damien Binder (vocals) and Chris Van De Geer (guitar) say they encountered a mixed reaction. Either stolid indifference (Hamilton), mounting enthusiasm (Palmerston North) or, as at Ohakune, a hail of beer glasses. To which tall, quiet Damien (who turns into a demon on stage) retaliated with some priceless repartee. After some hesitation they agree with my suggestion that in rock music, any reaction is a million times better than none, and if someone was moved to hurl a glass, at least it means you were getting under their skin. Second Child's music isn't deliberately confrontational but it could be taken as a challenge to the insecure.

Talking to them at Chris's pad, I learn that they're reasonably clean livin', healthy food eatin' young men (Chris offers me a piece of vegetarian pie), serious for a bunch of twenty-one year olds, but not too serious, just no bull, like their music.

"We're not aggressive or depressive..." says Chris.

"It's desperate but it's hopeful, bleak but with a yonder horizon just moving up," suggests Damien, who sings about personal stuff. "Like I do things wrong and I fuck people off or I look at myself sometimes and I don't really like what I see, and it's sort of like saying, well I fucked up here and I wanna be better."

They admit that humour doesn't really get a look in in their kind of sound, which at its best manages to combine intricacy with density, Chris's lead guitar filigree laid over Jules' big bad drumming, Damien's

vocals bearing down from on high. Theo Jackson, the bassist from the Deep Sea Racing Mullets has just replaced Barbara Morgan but don't worry, they hired him for his energy and sympatico personality not his funkability. Which means Chris and Damien are the only surviving members from the original 1987 line-up, formed while they were still at school: only the name remains the same.

Covers are a no-no. Although it occurred to me that it would be cool for them to tackle a Frank Sinatra song, being as how Damien is a Frank fan, thinking of the brilliant heavy-as-lead treatment Killdozer gave to Neil Diamond's 'I Am I Said'. But no, Second Child would rather stick with their own songs.

As far as guitar influences go, Chris says he just tries to avoid playing anything that sounds like anyone else. He avoids bar chords "like the plague" because of the standard rock sound they project,

preferring to experiment with discordant notes and droning strings. With the result that sometimes people call his style soulless.

"Yeah, that's the joke about it — I've got about as much soul as a concrete slab. There's feeling but it's not soul feeling, it's more driving emotion, intensity, aggressive, challenging sound."

On the subject of influences, I note that Chris has a tiny record collection. He concurs, saying he had to sell a bunch to make ends meet and never got round to replacing them. He owns one CD (Bob Mould) for the compact disc player he plans on buying one day. And then without batting an eye or blushing or anything he reveals that he listens to REM (!) and Nine Inch Nails, and three years ago he reappraised Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Neil Young and all the other heavy-weights you turn off to in school when all the people you hate are tuned into them.

As for the future, Second Child express the usual desire to play in Australia, plus they'd like to follow up the release of *Magnet* with a four-track EP for a possible combination release in America. Meanwhile they'll settle for the Fugazi support slot — just confirmed! **DONNA YUZWALK**



SC(L-R) Chris Van de Geer, Theo Jackson, Damien Binder, Jules Barnett.

Hard Fast & ...



Forget Jimmy Barnes, forget AC/DC, the real wild men of Australian rock are on their way here, the filth gods themselves, the Hard-Ons. Formed in Sydney in 1985 when Blackie, Keish and Ray were all of 15 or so, they've left a trail of destruction in their wake ever since. These are the men who called one of their tours the 'It's O.K. to be Mongy' tour, who profess a longing for 'westie chicks', who's first album was called *Dickcheese* and who produce some of the finest hard edged pop you'll ever hear anywhere in the world.

On a recent stint in England bassist Ray felt some busking was in order, so with Blackie compering and explaining that "Bing Lee needed to return to Tibet to continue his Kung Fu studies" he tried his fire-breathing act most successfully until chemical burns forced him to retire. Such tomfoolery has been contained this time around as he is being interviewed by me, and we're both trying hard to be quite serious.

You guys are always touring Europe or Japan, how come you're so popular there?

"We're big in Japan because we got a major record deal, they put out three of our CDs, and in Europe we've toured four times and been on major TV shows and stuff, so people know who we are. We rely on heavy touring to get us match fit for the shows. It's like cricket, some cricket players play too many one day matches and they get burnt out for the test match, but we have to play a lot of gigs to get us match fit, to make us tight for the important gigs."

Like New Zealand, how come it's taken so long to get here?

"I don't know. It's quite ironic that we've played Europe four times and America twice but we've never been to New Zealand."

It's more annoying considering your very recommended live shows.

"Initially we were constantly sloppy, lots of bad gigs and a few good ones. It's like in cricket, you get a really fast bowler like Imran Khan, and early in their career they'll be really fast but sloppy most of the time, but as they mature they learn to bowl a lot more consistently with experience. It's like that with us."

Uh huh. You've been developing a real pop sensibility over the last few records haven't you?

"This is true. When we first started we were like a noise punk band, but we wrote all these love songs and went through a period of playing all this sixties music, and by the time our first album came out, that was influenced by a lot of Heavy Metal. It's just stages the band goes through. At the moment the songs we've got lined up are a lot more experimental heavy metal in style, so I think although the pop phase was strong on *Yummy* it's changing. The new stuff is more like the B side of the 'Let There Be Rock' single we did we Henry Rollins."

How did that come about?

"He's toured Australia twice and our manager asked if he'd like to record with us. We really liked his vocal approach. Our drummer sings and he has a more melodic style, his influences are people like Joey Ramone whereas Henry Rollins is a totally different school of singing."

What about your sense of humour? It's pretty tongue in cheek. Do you ever get hassled about it?

"When we first started, we did stuff like putting a picture of 3 guys in KKK outfits on a single cover, and

one was black, one was Asian and one was white, so it was actually us, and it was making fun of Nazi-ism, but we still got accused of being racist which is really dumb. In Europe the sense of humour is different to ours down there, it's not as dry so some times it's a problem. I think now though we're well known enough for people to understand us. We've never bothered trying to explain that it's all tongue in cheek though, as some things don't need explaining. It's like if a famous painter put a written thing on a painting explaining what it was, it would take something away from it."

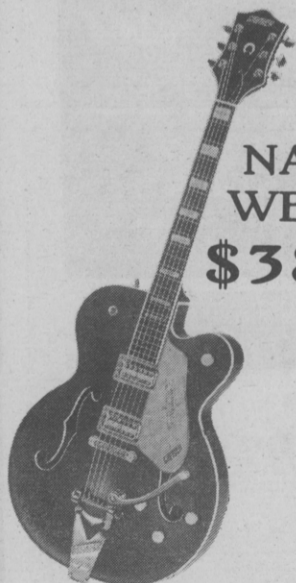
Lastly, what if a major company offered you a deal? Would you take it?

"A major deal for the Hard-Ons? Well, most big companies have a set way of thinking about promotion which would kill a band like the Hard-Ons who rely heavily on individual thought and a unique style of presentation, the way we play and especially our art, and we don't want restraints on what we do. We had trouble with *Smell My Finger* and that's not good for the Hard-Ons, we have to maintain our standards. At the moment we have the best of both worlds though, as we're accountable to Waterfront Records who are very independent, but we're distributed by Festival who do artists like Joe Cocker and Kylie Minogue, and are like a bunch of millionaires basically. It's a good arrangement."

But seriously folks, the Hard-Ons rip totally. *Yummy* is a great album, and the boys will be here live and in person in early December, so check 'em out. Who knows, the fire eating may be back on the bill.

KIRK GEE

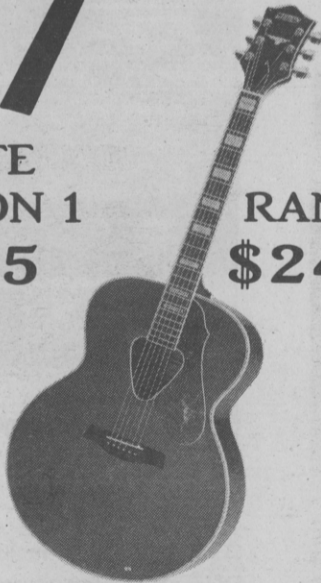
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