

► incredulous at the response we got on both tours."

(Harry walks in wearing a yellow beach towel, having been summoned from his snorkeling trip up north).

What were you guys doing in England

(at this point Harry walks in wearing a yellow beach towel, fresh from a snorkeling trip up north).

Picking up on the tour theme, Harry says the Exponents don't differentiate between playing Tokoroa on a Tuesday night and the Powerstation on a Friday. They like playing the small places, as indicated by the fact that they played Dannevirke three times last year, the most they've played anywhere.

"Those places appreciate it so much that a band comes and they say: 'thank you for coming, no band's ever come here,'" he says. "In Blenheim we got 5 per cent of the population!"

Longstanding popularity aside, the Exponents are also riding the crest of a new wave of excitement about homegrown music on the part of young audiences. Suddenly it's cool to be hip to New Zealand music. As Jordan says, the kids these days seem to buy everything. Mikey from Push Push regularly exhorts his audiences to buy New Zealand music before ramming the point home with a Chills' cover. There's renewed interest in early 80s' bands like the Dudes, who Jordan reckons are more popular now than they were when they existed. And it's not just audiences getting dewey-eyed, there appears to be little factionalism between bands who, one might think, would not be overly impressed by each other's work. Thus you'll see Shayne Carter patting Jordan Luck on the back at the Gluepot and someone like Paul from Freak Power — a band supposedly hanging out on rock's wilder fringes — enthusiastically endorsing the Exponents at the Esplanade.

To which Jordan replies that they've been mates with people like

the Chills, the Bats and the Verlaines from way back.

"It's hard enough in New Zealand without bands being at each other's throats," he says, "People don't 'stand' for something, that's journalists constructing things."

"I think it's cool that everyone's getting on well together and helping each other out," adds Harry.

All you small towns out there can look forward to another Exponents tour later in the year before they head overseas to promote *Something Beginning With C*. The Exponents may not know exactly what they stand for, but they know where they stand: firmly in the mainstream. Their aim? To have their music heard by as many people as possible.

"Every band does," says Harry.

"Even any independent band will say they want to play to as many people as they can. I like the music and I think 'shit, I hope that bugger likes it as well'. It's like playing my record to my flatmates, when they get into it, it's cool."

"We do a lot of live work and in New Zealand it's hard enough getting people out," says Jordan, "let alone raging them up once they're there and if you can do that the way we can and then go into the studio and capture that spirit that rocks out, then you've got a really good album. It's got a lot of spirit."

But will live audiences be seeing a sober and subdued Jordan Luck on stage? Has giving up drinking adversely affected the creative process?

"It's no different," replies the eminently reasonable Mr Luck. "I drank heaps, but I'm going to drink again. It was a big bet until Xmas day, two and a half grand each from five losers. But I didn't notice any difference because while I drank a lot I was always coherent, generally — two or three times I'd go off on another tangent, but I think a tangent that is quite interesting as well. But parties aren't as much fun." **DONNA YUZWALK**

MOJO's Horny Holiday

One of the best things about contemporary music is the way people seem as keen to discuss it as listen to it. Young folks nowadays are as knowledgeable about the semiotics of rock as they are about the latest G'n'R scandal. I've heard completely valid, well thought out and clever arguments supporting both the pro and anti 'state of modern music' thing. Then of course, there's Mojo Nixon's approach: "Too many rock bands nowadays are too serious, rock music should be loud and stupid and obnoxious, I mean it's fine to want to save the Rain Forests but to do it a tree at a time with a pony tail and an attitude is not good!"

"You never hear the good stuff nowadays, there's nothing like that on a major label, and you'll never really find it. Occasionally things slip through the cracks, that's what I like about Nirvana. They've taken that thing that the Replacements had but lost, and they've picked it up. People have been listening to their older brother or sister's record collection, and they can hear some of that essence in a few new bands, it's sort of filtered down through popular culture."

Probably the worst thing about music nowadays is the utter blandness of our stars. Perry Farrell and his cross dressing drug problems is about as wild as it gets, something that pales into insignificance next to the likes of Jerry Lee Lewis, a teenager marrying, wife shooting, car wrecking wildman, and he was a mainstream artist.

"I'm about the rejects and lunatics, not the McDonalds or the K-Mart or



Mojo Nixon

the Burger King. I'm about the weirdo that builds a roadside statue of Jesus out of beer cans because that's what America was founded on, people who were kicked out of other countries for being to weird. The pioneers, the religious fanatics, the pirates, that's where America comes from and where rock music comes from."

Mojo is not kidding here, most of his songs are paens to the more interesting elements of American society like Bigfoot truck racing, a sport that seems to have taken over from wrestling as the great white trash sport.

"It's actually the same thing, sort of a mechanised version of destruction. Sport goes in cycles but it remains a giant morality play, sort of a modern day Shakespeare where you have the good guys struggling against the bad guys and usually the good guys overcome evil."

One the icons Mojo often refers to is none other than the great Evil Knievel, a true psycho and a big

influence on myself in my formulative years. I was stunned to discover that the now retired Evil is a serious artist.

"We talked to Evil about using a painting, but he wanted all this money and rights and stuff so it wasn't viable, but my manager Bullethead did speak with him. I bought it when we were out in Montana, we went to his sister's restaurant. I have a piece of John Wayne's house too, the one he was born in, I grabbed a roof tile. All I need now is one of those John Cougar paintings. The guys a painter now, what a dol! What's becoming of rock and roll? Next we'll have Bruce Springsteen knitting! John Cougar is like 'Yeah, I'm a serious painter, I paint eight hours a day.' Damn! What I need is a painting each by Evil, Hitler and John Cougar, sort of an unholy artistic trinity!"

Another Mojo fixation is a very fine band by the name of the Dick

Nixons. They are true individuals, one of the few acts who will convert the night's door take into dollar bills and blow them back into the crowd through a 'money shoot tube' at the high point of the show.

"I'm going to release their record on my own Triple Nixon records. They're a great band, sort of an idiot savant punk rock band who do songs about how Richard Nixon should be President again. They're performance artists and they don't realise it. I'm also doing a Christmas album of my own called *Horny Holiday*"

Not suprisingly, very few major labels want to have anything to do with Mojo, who is currently without a deal.

"My old record company Enigma, they went bust trying to make David Cassidy a star again! I wound up being re-released by I.R.S. because of the Dread Zeppelin connection. I am trying to sort something out as I have 10 songs together for a new album." The 'old' album, *Otis* is a very fine work, featuring as it does a brilliant band. The likes of John Doe (X), Country Dick Montana (Beat Farmers) and Eric Roscoe Ambel (The Del Lords) have all come together to create a fine noise, well suited to Mojo's suprisingly soulful tendencies.

"We had a great time with that band, we hadn't played together before but everyone just sort of rose to the occasion and it all worked. For most of the record we're just playing live except for some of Roscoe's vocals cause he could sing and that kind of threw me! We were pretty much the first post cowpunk supergroup!"

With a soundcheck beckoning, it was time to end my little philosophic discussion with Mr Nixon, but he did leave one last message for the youth of New Zealand.

"The rumour about me and the sheep is all true."

They don't make 'em like that anymore. (Thankfully.) **KIRK GEE**

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