

DAVID KILGOUR

Fourteen years after David Kilgour first stumbled on stage with his older brother and a school friend he has recorded his first solo album, *Here Come The Cars*.

Coming from the Dunedin music scene which established itself around the ethos of 'the band', a consciously proclaimed solo album is a definite step away from the norm for Kilgour. One listen to the album, however, makes it apparent that it's been an enjoyable step for him. The album bursts with the feeling of someone at long last let loose in a studio to do exactly what they want.

Although Kilgour occasionally missed the disagreements that characterize a band in the studio he has enjoyed not having someone

telling him what not to do. Smiling, he refers to the album as a "nice and selfish little project."

Kilgour had previously flirted with the idea of doing a solo album in the mid-80s, before disappearing into an apathetically created musical void following the demise of the Great Unwashed. It was not until the first year of the 90s that the idea turned from a vague possibility into a strong probability. By the middle of last year he was in Writhe Studio with the Strangeloves' rhythm section — bassist Noel Ward and



drummer Tane Takona. The songs dated from Kilgour's time with Stephen and the reformed Clean, but the tapes he left the studio with sounded like nothing he had done with either of those two bands; his ubiquitous treble guitar had disappeared in the mix.

Kilgour had come to very specific conclusions about the record's sound prior to recording. As with all the best laid plans they were thrown out the window soon after entering the studio. The remaining hankering to do something different caused a negative desire to dominate:

"I definitely wanted to make a record that didn't sound like the Clean or Stephen, so it was always going to be a warm record. Sometimes I should have used some treble guitar, but I wanted to get rid of that sound on the record and cut down on the reverb. It's still gonna basically sound like that live. I just didn't want to hear another Clean record, though it doesn't sound that different... a bit warmer."

Here Come The Cars is a mellow album, it would have been a good summer record, but it missed November release and so, in line with Flying Nun policy, is now out on CD and cassette only. The title track is a good mood-setter for the album in terms of tempo and feeling, reminiscent in places of David Sylvian. After numerous listenings Kilgour has, however, recently decided the song is similar in part to the Velvet Underground's 'Ocean'.

By the time I talk to David Kilgour at the end of January, he's had six months to listen to the album; six months to drive himself crazy. He remains happy with most of it, laughingly referring to it as his 70s soft rock album. On a vaguely related tangent you can understand what he means. The album is full of snippets that sound like stuff you've heard somewhere, but never listened to; songs that have been on the radio as you've grown up (in the 70s). This ain't no whimp rock album though. Throughout it there's a nice line in some soft distorted guitar which will undoubtedly get turned up in a live concert. On the album, with lots of big choruses, it makes the songs very palatable. Commercial sounding?

"Yeah it is commercial sounding. I tried to make it sound like a big budget, very produced album. It's still very raggedy compared to other modern stuff, but it's definitely commercial for me. I'm making music for myself, but choruses are the fodder of the pop song and it is still pop music and I want people to buy it. That's why we put out 'You Forget' as a single because it's the most obvious pop song with a really catchy ooh la la chorus."

One feature of *Here Come The Cars* is the frequency of 'ooh la la' type lyrics. Kilgour has always liked them, but in the past people have made him change them. The melody has always been more important to Kilgour. In terms of writing a song the lyrics come last to catch the feeling or mood of the song. Although cop-out 'ooh la la'-type lyrics still express the emotion.

Coming up with lyrics is no problem for Kilgour, the difficulty arises when he decides whether he wants to live with them. For *Here Come The Cars* he took all the lyrical ideas he had collected since he was 17 to Wellington, spreading the pile of paper out at Writhe and when necessary selecting appropriate lines that caught his eye. He's not one to talk about his lyrics, only on occasion does he himself stop to ponder them and then his

understanding of them changes each time he does that.

"Yeah I don't really analyse my lyrics that much, but I do try to say something without being too preachy, although that does pop out sometimes, and just try to be as real as possible... whatever that means... just trying to communicate something that isn't total crap, just trying to say how it is at a given moment, putting it down in black-and-white. Reporting back I s'pose."

Kilgour is, however, not totally happy with his ability to translate his felt emotions into songs.

"I'm coming to the point where I'm a wee bit tired of the melancholic... nah, not melancholy... what the woman said in *Rip It Up*, 'rallying against the burden of being oversensitive'. It's a weird line, but I can sorta see what she means. I am trying to write stuff, lyrically and musically which is not so much that way inclined. The album is sorta quite sweet, but aspects of it are quite dark, especially the lyrics y'know the, 'like hey, what's going on in the world, man' bit. Hopefully I'm done with that and maybe can express some happy emotions instead of them being dark all the time. That's fine, but it does get a bit tiring listening to yourself moan all the time, going on about how confused you are, because I'm not."

Kilgour laughs when asked if this means we can expect some happy songs on the next album.

"Probably not. The other day I started to write a positive song but... urgh... it started out so good, but then it became really twisted. Like I was thinking the other day, 'Tally Ho' is a very confused song, lyrically it's a very unhappy song. No lyrics I've done except 'Beatnik', which is dumb, have been happy enough."

As it is Kilgour is still very much focused on this album. A tour in late March is on the cards. The line-up will probably be the same as the album's, but it is liable to change. Kilgour has had enough of the restrictions a 'band' imposes:

"I don't want to get into this thing where 'we are a band and we do this'. I just want things to be a bit freer, so everyone's free to do what they want without being tied down. It's almost like a marriage being in a band sometimes: you get separated, other times you need counselling. I'd like to avoid that and make it as easy as possible."

Like an open marriage?

"Yeah. The music's so simple a drummer could probably get away without having to practice it — it's been done before. It's simple music so it wouldn't be a major problem if I had to find someone at the last minute."

Negotiations are underway at present to licence the album overseas. They will hopefully reach some sort of conclusion in the near future so Kilgour can tour the States before the year's end. As a representation of his work Kilgour is satisfied, though not totally happy with *Here Come The Cars*. There are a few rough edges; vocal takes Kilgour would prefer not to be there, a bit of fluctuation in the rhythm tracks. All generally in first takes:

"There's a lot of speeding up and slowing down, well mainly speeding up. There are a few lurches in there that can be obvious if you listen, but that doesn't bug me. If you can get a good take and it's there that's fine. As far as I can see that's what rock 'n' roll's about really — going upwards, backwards, whatever, messing around, diving in and out."

CRAIG ROBERTSON

FUTURE RECORDINGS

CHILLS, Soft Bomb.
NEVILLE BROS, Family Groove.
DEF LEPPARD, Adrenalize.
THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS, Apollo 18.
TROGGS, Athens Andover.
FREAK THE SHEEP, Volume 2.
CAMEO, Emotional Violence.
THE CURE, Wish.
RIDE, Going Blank Again.

IAN McCULLOCH, Mysterio.
GUN, Gallus.
SOUP DRAGONS, Hotwired.
BRAND NEW HEAVIES, Brand New Heavies.
ROLLINS BAND, The End of Silence.
THE FALL, Code Selfish.
MADNESS, Divine Madness.
JOE COCKER, Night Calls.

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