

proach and we thought that he would be perfect. Van Dyke was just thrilled because he generally gets approached by bands who just want a little bit of embellishment here and there. On 'Water Wolves' he got free reign to be as wild as he wanted and he appreciated the challenge. I was really thrilled by the way it worked out."

You retain a fan's attitude to music in the sense that you're always buying records and you've probably got the biggest Flying Nun collection.

"I think I've got the only complete one at the moment. Every actual proper Flying Nun release and many different variations on those and I've already written in my will that it's going to go to the Hocken Library in Dunedin. It just seems crazy that something as important as that, no-one's taken care of it. Roger Shepherd is always giving away his only copies to some rabid Flying Nun fan from overseas, when they come over."

Being a music fan, what sort of things have you discovered lately?

"I'm still ravenously consuming old good quality vinyl. I try to keep on top of all major trends of music, try to get the best two or three examples of each genre but just the physical practicality of trying to listen to that much music is beyond me. I'm about 600-700 albums behind now in terms of listening."

Does listening to other people's music conflict with your own writing?

"No, it's just like reading books. The more you fill your head with different concepts and ideas the more it enhances your own vision. It's really helped me envisage some of the things I'm trying to do, things that I hear in my head. I think it's very important, it's not like rock music is such a vast thing historically that it's impossible to get a grasp on it."

Despite listening to a wide variety of sounds, your vision is actually quite specific.

"I've always tried to keep obvious influences out — go through with a microscope to see if we picked up anything subconsciously which is some-

body else's. One or two have slipped through but not many."

What inspired your tribute to Randy Newman?

"It's people like him, Syd Barrett, Nick Drake and Brian Wilson that have gone out on a limb to try and push the boundaries of pop music, to try and put a bit of content into it, a bit more substance and the hard reality is people don't want that, they want pop music to be lightweight love songs. So they found themselves alone and, abandoned by their peers, generally ruined their lives to some extent, so hopefully that won't happen to me."

"I think Randy Newman has always been a victim of his music in production. I've seen him twice live and the best versions of his songs are him just sitting at his piano. To hear him in the 70s trying to bring in Eagles production — then they bring in the pallbearers, Jeff Lynne and Mark Knopfler's crew. He must take a back seat and trust people to know the market place and try and sell his music, because I don't think he really cares about it that much."

Maybe he was making the decisions?

"Maybe, but then I don't think he'd be going and playing live like he does."

You say some fine words for vinyl but of course a 17 track album like *Soft Bomb* wouldn't fit on vinyl.

"We're doing it anyway, a limited run. It doesn't sound too bad. But this album's made for CD, we didn't even know if the vinyl was going to happen or not."

Are there 17 tracks that you'd want on vinyl? With CDs there's potential to have extras — are all these tracks equally important?

"Yeah, otherwise they would have been left off. We went in with 21 bits of music. Two of them weren't recorded, two of them ended up as extra tracks on the 'Male Monster' single. But everything we recorded worked out. We recorded bulk expecting at least one or two would fall away as we went along."

Would you look forward to the possibility of recording an album and not having to tour?

You've spoken of a backlog of

songs. Are you still using songs that you wrote in your teen years or are they recent?

"They're all pretty recent. 'Entertainer' is the only old one which the band never even played. The band never heard it until recently. It's quite funny cos everyone assumed it was a desperate song, it's about being a 15 year old, having access to dad's car, driving round couples. You have to be an entertainer to justify being there, Mr. Three. There are bits that have been sitting round in the library, so to speak, but in terms of lyrically it's all happened since *Submarine Bells*. The backlog's still there, there's still the unreleased Chill's songs that we've played live, up to 80 to 100 that have been worked on at various stages, some 400-500 riffs."

A lot of artists are getting a massive number of tracks issued that were never released at the time. Do you welcome that as a fan or fear it as a musician?

"As a fan I like it a lot. As a collector of old Bowie stuff for a long time I found that some of his best stuff wasn't released.

There were better demo versions. Two songs that were left off the *Young Americans* album were easily one or two of the best things he ever wrote. I like living in this age of the CD repackage, everyone digging out stuff, it sounding great. I'm a big CD collector now and I know that there's a good album's worth of unreleased Chills stuff, which will be another project for the future."

You will get your unreleased stuff together?

"Definitely. We're talking seriously about getting a Chills fan club thing, the international Chills enthusiasts, ICE Club, and making available all sorts of stuff through that. My four track studio demos, maybe scratchy old Chills recordings..."

In the studio, do you consider whether you're recording Chills music to be played loudly or quietly? Or doesn't it matter.

"After *Brave Words*, which came out such a quiet album, for various reasons, we've always made it to be played as loud as possible."

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