

COLLIER DOWN 80





Written by Lawrie Masterson

Principal photographer GREG NOAKES

Additional photographs by Martin Webby

and courtesy of Alberts, Tony Bainsby Publicity (England),

CBS, Cinema International Corporation, EMI, Festival,

Mushroom, Polygram, RCA, TV Week and WEA.

Designer: Howard Binns-McDonald

Editors: Helen Findlay and Nina Riemer

Thanks to: Greg for sharp pictures and droll humor; Molly for turning up on time . . . once; Rob for half-time scores and full-time co-operation; The recording company PR people who should start a campaign for better hours and conditions; TJ for being tolerable and tolerant . . . sometimes; The ABC Publicity Department for envelopes and orange juice; Special thanks to all the Countdown crew and artists for their co-operation and talents; Extra-special thanks to Evelyn and Joel and Pat, Drew and Kim.

Published by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. © 1980 Australian Broadcasting Commission, 145-153 Elizabeth Street, Sydney 2000. Postal Address: GPO 487, Sydney 2001. National Library of Australia card number and ISBN 0 642 97557 4. Printed in Australia by Offset Alpine Printing Pty Ltd, Sydney. Typesetting by Typographics Communications Pty Ltd, Sydney.

TV WEEK ROCK MU

The first TV Week Rock Music Awards were televised live on Sunday, April 13, 1980, as a **Countdown** special from Melbourne's Comedy Theatre, culminating months of negotiations and planning and giving the rock scene its first really credible awards in years.

The tie-up between the ABC's rock show and Mr Rupert Murdoch's commercially orientated magazine was unique in itself. That the two organisations combined to present such a well staged and well received awards program was a tribute to both and to the individuals involved on camera and behind the scenes.

A measure of the credibility of the awards can be gauged from the willingness of others to become involved, too.

Top programmers from rock radio stations around Australia and the leading rock journalists from various publications judged the winners of some categories. Radio stations, particularly, and the media in general then seemed to gather forces to ensure the awards were well publicised.

The public, too, played its part by voting for other award categories and giving overwhelming support on the night, both in the theatre and through television ratings.

But, like most television shows, the TV Week Rock Music Awards did not just happen . . . and not quite everything went right. From **Countdown's** point of view, the venue itself was something of a hurdle. The Comedy Theatre, now owned by leading rock promoter, Paul Darity, was built well before television was ever heard of in this country.

It does not exactly cater for the sophisticated technical facilities needed to put a major television show live to air in a slick, efficient manner, but that was overcome.

What could not be overcome were the need to adhere to the ABC's precise programming schedules and the fact that human nature sometimes causes the occasional, tiny misjudgment. So, while the 900 people inside the theatre were creating their own kind of havoc after the major award had been announced, the millions of

viewers at home were watching a somewhat more sober weather report.

What was that old saying . . . ? Right, that's showbusiness!

Still, all the planning by TVWeek and **Countdown** executives was hardly a waste.

After the first meeting about six months prior to the actual awards night, the pressure started to build. Bookings for acts to perform live were confirmed and, one by one, individual stars agreed to present various awards. A magnificent

set, in silver and black, gave the old Comedy Theatre a virtual facelift.

The live music came from Split Enz, Number One at the time with *I Got You*, Christie Allen, who had just missed the top slot on the charts with *He's*



SIC AWARDS 1980



My Number One, and Australian Crawl, the band which shot to prominence late in 1979 with its first single, Beautiful People.

Little River Band's Glenn Shorrock agreed to link the entire show and Harry Wayne Casey, of KC and the Sunshine

Band, and Racey's Richard Gower were special guests.

With them on stage were top names such as Darryl Cotton, Graeme 'Shirley' Strachan, Colleen Hewett and John Farnham.

Countdown's Ian 'Molly' Meldrum presented a special

award which recognised a magnificent contribution to the show and the late Johnny O'Keefe's son, John junior, paid the awards the ultimate compliment by presenting a statuette in memory of his now legendary father.

But, apart from being a glamorous and - for those involved - highly prestigious night, the TV Week Rock Music Awards, televised live as a **Countdown** special, turned into a lot more for the Australian record industry.

It was recognition - very wide recognition - that rock in this country had finally come of age.

Only one thing remains to be said... and it can be said in the immortal words of presenters everywhere:

And the winners were...

INDUSTRY VOTE AWARDS

Johnny O'Keefe Memorial Award (for the best new talent, individual or group) - Mi-Sex
Best Australian Single - Computer Games (Mi-Sex)
Best Australian Album - First Under The Wire (Little River Band)

Best Australian Recorded Songwriter - Terry Britten
Best Australian Producer - Peter Dawkins
Best Australian Record Cover Design - Breakfast At Sweethearts (Cold Chisel)

Major Award (for the most outstanding achievement in Australian rock music in 1979) - Little River Band

SPECIAL AWARD

For continued co-operation, enthusiasm and professionalism towards **Countdown** - The Angels

PUBLIC VOTE AWARDS

Most Popular Male Performer - Jon English
Most Popular Female Performer - Christie Allen
Most Popular Group - Little River Band
Most Popular Record (single or album) - Computer Games (Mi-Sex)

DISC JOCKEY AWARDS

New South Wales - Ian McRae (2SM)
Victoria - Greg Evans (3XY)
Queensland - Wayne Roberts (4BK)
South Australia - Steve Curtis (5AD)
Western Australia - Lionel Yorke (6PM)
Tasmania - Jim Franklin (7HT)

COUNTDOWN NATIONAL DANCE



Xanadu might have started out as a fantasy, but it became a stunning reality on **Countdown** late in August, 1980.

The night after Olivia Newton-John had finished attending a chain of Australian premieres of the movie in which she co-stars with Gene Kelly, she performed two numbers from the show at the final of the **Countdown** Xanadu National Dance Contest, taped as a special at Chasers Discotheque in Melbourne. Produced and directed by Tony Vuat, it was an hour of excellent and exciting television, the result of months of planning and co-operation between **Countdown**, radio stations throughout Australia, TV Week and the Cinema International Corporation.

While hundreds of contestants were "dancing off" regional, then State finals, arrangements were being made for busy Melbourne streets to be blocked off so Olivia could arrive at Chasers in a motorcade surrounded by roller skaters. A crowd of thousands was there to greet her and she was hustled through the door to find one of the tracks from *Xanadu* — *Dancin'* — being performed

by female vocal group Patchwork, the consummately talented Bill Miller, formerly of the Ferrets, and his current band, the Great Blokes, and the ABC Orchestra. The number — '*Got Some Dancin' To Do*' — said everything about what was to follow.

At the last moment, it was discovered that John Travolta, Olivia's co-star in the box office smash, *Grease*, would be in Adelaide that very night. **Countdown** immediately dispatched a team to South Australia and re-united the superstars for the first time in two years via an interstate link-up.

Eventually, Olivia was to announce that Alain Lebrasse from Western Australia and Victoria's Nicholas Dearie had won the contest and free trips to Los Angeles. But Olivia herself was the big winner. She had charmed Australia yet again with her unpretentious attitude towards everyone and, of course, her talent. Three singles and a Number One album, all on the charts simultaneously, was fairly positive response, if you'll pardon the understatement of the year.

'You never know what the reception will be,' she said as she relaxed with her friend



XANADU CONTEST



of 15 years and co-compete, **Countdown's** untiring Ian 'Molly' Meldrum, after the dance contest final. 'When I arrived, all I knew for sure was the amount of work I was going to be doing. It's been very nice ... very exhausting. I think I'm going to flake right now.'



The incredible success of *Xanadu* — movie and soundtrack album — was the result of a combination of winners. Olivia herself is among the hottest female stars in the world. Gene Kelly is a screened legend, Olivia's major songwriter, Melbourne expatriate John Farrar, excelled again and so did the Electric Light Orchestra and Jeff Lynne, the man responsible for most of ELO's material.

'Actually it took him about 12 months to get together the five songs we did for the movie,' ELO's Bev Bevan said in an interview with **Countdown's** London connection, Cherry Ripe. 'It all became rather difficult in the studio ... nearly drove us mad. The film company even went as far as filming some of the dance routines around the demo tapes Jeff gave them, so we couldn't alter the songs in any way. They had to be exactly that length.'

It all must have seemed worthwhile as Olivia, Kelly, Farrar and ELO raked in millions of dollars from every country in the world in which the movie and soundtrack were released.

Certainly *Xanadu* did provide **Countdown** with some of its most magical moments during 1980.



FLOWERS

The rock industry has never been famous for doing anything by the book, so it's hardly surprising that Flowers — one of the big hopes for the industry's future — looked back as far as 1957 when they planned their recording debut.

Their first single *I Can't Help Myself* was the first 10-inch disc released in this country since the hey-days of the late Johnny O'Keefe. The extended play release included two versions of the song, a short one obviously aimed at the time-conscious commercial radio stations and a longer one as a bonus to the band's legion of fans.

Iva Davies (guitar, vocals), Keith Welch (bass, vocals), Adam Hall (keyboards) and John Lloyd (drums) now look set to become one of Australia's bands of the 1980s. That prospect alone is a credit to them when the fact that they have been together only two short years is taken into consideration.

Iva Davies, who wrote *I Can't Help Myself*, was busy preparing other material for Flowers' first album — *Icehouse* — when the band made its first appearance on **Countdown** mid-year.

"Releasing *I Can't Help Myself* on a 10-inch record was purely for novelty value," he said. "It seems to have worked. Originally our biggest following was in Sydney, which is our base, but we've been getting around a fair bit. We've started to do well in Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane if you have a look at the sales of the record." Flowers is a band ready to credit the early influences of each of its members and pay tribute to those influences as part of its stage presentation.

"We like to be as original as possible, but there are songs by other people that we really like doing" Davies said. "On stage we're still doing some obscure T Rex stuff



and a few other numbers that groups like the Easybeats and the Kinks put out years ago. They're some of our really old favourites."

Flowers, given their first national exposure by **Countdown**, might not have grown to the headline

act status yet, but that progression seems to be only a matter of time. A tour with the Stranglers and selected appearances supporting Australian giants such as the Angels have given mass audiences a tempting taste of just what this band can do.

Add to that a very realistic and refreshing attitude towards their business and some solid recording company backing and you end up with every confidence that Flowers is a group which is here to stay ... at the top.

COLD CHISEL



songwriting as well. Every member of the band is credited with a title on the *Ear* album.

Cold Chisel's tough image is based round that rugged-looking little Scot, Jimmy Barnes. He actually looks like the son of a former Empire boxing champion, giving him a slightly menacing presence on stage, and barks rather than sings. Yet he has a voice which can handle almost any song. Fortunately, most of the material he is doing these days is original and intrinsically Australian.

'That's happened as a matter of course' the band's major songwriter, quietly spoken Don Walker, said. 'Nobody wants to write songs about things of which they have no first-hand experience. Like, some Australian bands are writing songs — boogie American songs — when they haven't even lived there or been there. Well, that's alright for them, but it must be hard to do it with any conviction. We have never actually sat down and made a decision to write songs about Australia, that's just the way it's turned out. It's hard to find any real reasons in retrospect. Even our first album was fairly



Uncompromising, driving foot flat to the boards at their own, breakneck speed ... Also smart enough and talented enough to come up with one of the really sensational, local albums of 1980 ... Cold Chisel.

With *Breakfast At Sweethearts*, then the brilliant *East*, the band has elbowed its way to that status which hangs somewhere above the top echelon of bands in Australia. Supergroup is a term not often used on the local scene and it's one which Cold Chisel probably would sneer at. We won't use it.

The whole thing started more than four years ago in Adelaide and has survived

and flourished through some recording and live triumphs and some enormous differences in personalities.

How does Jimmy Barnes, for instance, a native of Glasgow's notorious Gorbals area, manage to interpret academically inclined Don Walker's songs so well? What are either of them doing associated with a guitar hero such as Ian Moss? And how do the aggressive Steve Prestwich on drums and the quiet Phil Small on bass manage to form such a tight rhythm section?

Opposites really do attract. And that applies not only to their performances and recording, but to their

Australian in its lyric content. There were no songs about driving a truck through Houston, Texas. Writing that sort of thing doesn't ring true unless you've been there and I hadn't until recently.'

While most people will be hoping that Cold Chisel's musical direction will not change radically in the near future, the influences on the band are certain to become more diverse. America and Europe are calling loudly and Walker admits that the band is aiming at some 'controlled touring schedules' overseas.

The sales of the albums are likely to get out of control should that happen.

BLONDIE

The American critics who wrote off Blondie as a force in rock'n'roll at the start of 1980 must still have red faces. Deborah Harry and the boys released two singles almost simultaneously — *Call Me* from the American Gigolo soundtrack and *Astoria* — and both were monster hits. Now it's the turn of the Blondie tracks from the *Roadie* movie, which stars the group and Meat Loaf.

Blondie's next album is being produced by Mick Chapman, the man responsible for the group's early hits, and now those same American critics are sitting back wondering just how much magic the band can produce this time.

A legion of Blondie fans throughout the world is waiting, too ... waiting with excited anticipation.



THE PRETENDERS



The Pretenders appeared, apparently from out of nowhere, with a self-titled, debut album early in 1980 and, before long, the first single cut from it was Number One on the **Countdown** chart. *Brass In Pocket* stamped them as one of the finds of the year ... and gave singer Chrissie Hynde the 'overnight success' for which she had been striving for five years or more!

American Chrissie and Englishmen James Honeyman-Scott (vocals, guitar, keyboards), Martin Chambers (drums) and Pete Dinklage (bass) are as special as their hit.

Actress, comedienne, interpreter, singer ... star. The Devine Miss M a title Bette Midler truly deserves.

Arguably, Bette is the top show-woman of the current era and, since as far back as 1973, she has sold albums consistently and packed out houses. But 1980 will go down as the year she had her first Number One.

Her performance in *The Rose*, for which she was nominated for an Academy Award, and the music from the movie saw to all that. And Bette Midler's talent is such that *The Rose* is likely to be only the beginning.

BETTE MIDLER



PAUL MCCARTNEY



There is simply no substitute for genius.

That just about sums up the reasons why Paul McCartney is still way up there, even higher than the top of the rock pile. McCartney has proved, too, that his genius is not confined only to his music. In itself, the music would have been enough. His *McCartney II*

album might have been slightly self-indulgent and it might not have received the greatest raves from the critics, but the public loved it. And that, eventually, is the only yardstick of success.

After 18 years as a superstar, Paul McCartney proved that he can still produce the goods and more.

He supported singles such as *Coming Up* and *Waterfalls* with some of the most technically adept and visually pleasing film clips ever seen on *Countdown* and showed, yet again, that he has managed to survive as a person through it all. His interview with *Countdown's* London connection, Cherry Ripe,

portrayed him as the same, amiable guy who always has been eager to please.

One big cloud over his year — the drag bust which saw him jailed for a short time instead of starting a Japanese tour — seemed to disappear without trace. Perhaps it was just the nature of the man to shrug it off or, perhaps again, his public was more intent on his music rather than any sensationalism surrounding him. The whole episode is reputed to have cost him about \$1 million, but it's doubtful that even that staggering amount severely dented the bank balance of the man who is certainly the top-selling composer and recording artist of all time.

McCartney's involvement in the rock business moves far outside the sphere of his personal career. His reputation as a shrewd businessman is widespread and borne out by the fact that he owns the publishing rights to the catalogue of Buddy Holly songs. In recent years they have been revived by acts such as Linda Ronstadt and the Knack and the result has been a tidy sum for McCartney. He was also responsible for one number, titled *Gel Friend*, on Michael Jackson's album, *Off The Wall*, and just about anyone associated with that had to make money.

The mogul in McCartney is matched only by the instincts and qualities which have led him to be part of a happy marriage and the father of a family which has a stability belying his status in the often crazy and unpredictable world of rock'n'roll. He is due to release another album soon — this time, sessions produced by George Martin, producer of many of the Beatles' albums — and it will strengthen that status further.

The legend just continues to grow and grow.

The wait seemed never-ending. Kiss-teria reigned in Australia long before it was announced that the four superheroes would tour this country and, as soon as that announcement was made, everything went overboard. And no wonder! Kiss on tour was the biggest rock extravaganza Australia has seen . . . the full production and then some. And all that in a year in which Kiss — united in its line-up and attitude towards the industry since 1975 — experienced its first major upheaval.



When drummer Peter Criss announced half way through the year that he was finished as an on-stage member of the Kiss empire, the rock world was kept waiting for months before his replacement was named. When that happened **Countdown**, as usual, was right in there. Ian Meldrum flew to New York and

arranged for the band, with new drummer Eric Carr, to host a special edition of the show. That they did it from the top of the towering World Trade Center was typical of the Kiss style. Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley and Paul Stanley introduced Eric Carr to Australia's Kiss Army from a dizzying height one tends to associate with everything the band does. Nothing in the Kiss kaleidoscope is less than spectacular, from the sophisticated travel arrangements to the mind-boggling stage performances. Kiss and **Countdown** are really the perfect rock'n'roll marriage. One makes uncompromising rock music and visually stunning film clips. The other is a perfect vehicle.

Long before Kiss was a major chart success in Australia, the band's clips made them one of the most requested acts on **Countdown** and often the show obliged.

Virtually everything that can be said about Kiss — in both praise and damnation — already has been said. What remains is the fact that Kiss is the ultimate in showmanship and a band which provides its fans with exactly what they want.

And, after all, isn't that what it's all about?





AUSTRALIAN CRAWL

Australian Crawl has the distinction of having made one of the most spectacular debuts in the history of Australian rock.

The band's first album, *The Boys Light Up*, not only went Top Five throughout the country, but it also produced three hit singles — *Beautiful People*, the title track, then *Downhearted*. Not bad for a group which claims never to have made a conscious effort to come up with a hit . . . and a group which has had to overcome more than its share of hassles.

Singer James Reyne made his first appearance on *Countdown* in 1979 with both wrists in plaster, the result of a car accident. James was still 'plastered' when Australian Crawl toured the country in support of the group, the Knack.

Shortly after the band performed *Beautiful People* at the TV Week Rock Music Awards, televised by *Countdown* in April, guitarist Brad Robinson wound up in hospital. Then *Countdown* slapped a ban on the title track of Australian Crawl's album — the lyrics, said the powers-that-be, contained insinuations too strong for the show's 6 pm audience. Right or wrong, the ban prompted some stinging criticism of the show in Australia's rock Press and a 'feud' between *Countdown* and Australian Crawl became a media mania. Sure there was some strong argument from both sides, but both remained professional through it all.

'The ban seemed to have two effects' James Reyne said. 'We were unhappy about it because appearing on *Countdown* can definitely help your sales, yet because of the ban, radio seemed to get behind us all the more. *Countdown* wanted me to change four words in the

song, but I decided to stick to my guns. The person I felt sorry for through it all was Ian Meldrum because he seemed to cop all the blame. Anyway, it's all cool now.'

When *Downhearted* was cut as a single from the Crawl's David Briggs-produced album, the band was back on *Countdown* with James comping — and the song started shooting into charts all over the country.

Under the management wing of Wheatley Brothers Entertainment, probably Australia's most successful 'exporters' of rock, Australian Crawl was destined to expand its horizons to the international market sooner or later. It happened sooner.

James was wary of taking up just any option for the sake of having a record released overseas, but an offer to release *Downhearted* as a market-testing single in the US was too good to refuse. An instant replay of Little River Band's success on the American charts might have just started.



THE ANGELS



It's a long way from playing jug music in Adelaide shopping centres to the top of the Australian charts and recognition in both the US and Europe, but that's exactly the route the Angels have taken. The band evolved from brothers Rick and John Brewster and Doc Neeson who, five years ago, were the Moonshine Jug and String Band. In those days they were part of a show which included a Punch and Judy puppet act and an ageing magician who was named Gene Raymond.

In April, 1980, while the Brewster brothers, Doc, drummer Graham 'Buzz' Bidstrup and bass player Chris Bailey were midway through their first international tour, Gene Raymond was on the stage of Melbourne's Comedy Theatre accepting a special award on the band's behalf. The Angels were recognised for their special contribution to **Countdown** at the first TV Week Rock Music Awards televised direct.

'Gene's great' Doc Neeson said soon after the band's return to Australia. 'We used to do about three songs, then they'd have the Punch and Judy show, then Gene would come on and do about twenty minutes, then



we'd come back and finish the show with another three or four songs. We used to be knocked out by him.'

These days Gene Raymond and the rest of Australia are constantly being knocked out by the Angels. They continue to break attendance records around the country and, if there was ever any doubt

before, their fourth album, called *Dark Room*, put them up there with the Aussie elite. The best cuts from two previous albums, *Face To Face* and *No Score*, were re-mixed and put together for the band's international debut and the Angels set off for Europe and America for an 'introductory' tour. In some parts of America,

especially, they found they already had a really large following.

'We thought we were only going to get to a few radio stations and stuff like that, but the tour turned out to be a lot more,' Doc said. 'Radio had already started to pick up on the record by the time we arrived, so we re-routed the tour to take in the places where our songs were played.'

'We found we were able to go to places where the people knew the songs to some extent. At least there was enough interest so we weren't going into towns cold. It was very lucky for us that that sort of thing was happening. Our albums had been getting into America on imports, so some stations — KROQ in Los Angeles in particular — had been playing our material for about a year. Anyway we've been invited back.'

And no wonder. The Angels have not only established themselves as a premier group, but they've also shown that their development is not about to come to a halt. Doc and drummer Buzz Bidstrup combined as songwriters for the first time on the *Dark Room* album and came up with *No Score*, the Angels' biggest selling single so far.

'It gives us another angle and it seemed that we just needed that in the band,' Doc said. 'It's great.'

Australia seems likely to see less and less of the Angels as the band's international repulse grows.

'I guess if you're actually in America or Europe when you've got a record happening, it makes it all the more appealing to the radio stations and people in general,' Doc said. 'I suppose we will have to arrange ourselves to be over there as much as we can.'

Each homecoming should be a monster.

One of the highlights of the Countdown-Canada National Dance Contest involved someone who had absolutely nothing to do with the movie. About 80 per cent of the contest finalists chose to dance to the music of Michael Jackson ... and no wonder. His *Off The Wall* album was one of the top sets of 1979 and 1980. Last September it chalked up a year in America's Top 20, a performance no less than remarkable.

Michael co-produced the album with a member of American music's elite, Quincy Jones. The two first worked together on the movie *The Wiz* — Michael as the star and Quincy the musical director — and their collaboration in the recording studios resulted in an album as near as possible to perfect. *Off The Wall* also signalled Michael Jackson's total maturity as a singer and performer ... and that's really saying something when you consider that he picked up his first Grammy Award in 1971 as a 13-year-old member of the Jackson Five!

The album further demonstrated Michael's ability as a songwriter, too, and proved yet again that he can handle anything from the disco-orientated *Don't Stop Till You Get Enough* to the beautiful, sensitive ballad, *She's Out Of My Life*. Both were major hits as singles cut from *Off The Wall*.

Not even the sky is a limit as far as Michael Jackson's future is concerned. While *Off The Wall* continues to linger on the charts, his career as part of the Jacksons — with brothers Jackie, Tito, Marlon and Randy — has expanded further with the recent release of the album *Triumphs*. Work on Michael's solo follow-up to *Off The Wall* has been completed and it is due to be released soon, the end of a long wait for his fans.



ROMANTICS



Australia was the first country in the world to make the Romantics a hit. A film clip of their single, *What I Like About You*, turned up suddenly on **Countdown** and the group was away — to such an extent that they decided to tour Australia later in the year mainly on the strength of that one hit.

The hard rocking foursome from Detroit — Jimmy Marinos (drums), Rich Cole (bass) and Wally Palmer and Mike Skill (guitars) — became one of the finds of the year. Their durability is still to be tested but their producer, Englishman Pete Solley, has something of a reputation for coming up with hits. Just ask Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons.

KIM DURANT



THE TOURISTS



Despite the success of *I Only Want To Be With You*, originally recorded by Dusty Springfield, England's the Tourists are not a 60s revival band. In fact, they are being hailed as a band for the 80s and the fact that they even recorded the old track was

just as much an accident as it was anything else.

The Tourists' backgrounds range from front room thumping away by guitarists Dave Stewart and Pect Coombes to session work by drummer Jim Toomey and bass player Eddie Chinn to

the academic achievements of singer-composer-flautist Annie Lennox, who is a graduate of London's Royal Academy of Music.

It's more than likely that the Tourists have dropped into the world music scene for a long, long stay.

Kim Durant is floating around somewhere between rock'n roll and country, but who cares...? Either way she is a dynamic little performer and, with her songwriting talents emerging more and more, she seems destined to achieve her ambition of prominence in the Australian music scene.

At 22, the attractive blond from Brisbane has plenty of time in front of her. Having been treated 'like everyone's favorite daughter' during 12 months of touring as Barry Crocker's support, Kim is now out to make it on her own and she has all the talent needed to do it. Watch out for her on the road with her own band during 1981.

The unqualified success of Air Supply in 1980 was a tribute to perseverance. Like Jon English, Air Supply's Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock were the products of the Australian production of *Jesu Christ, Superstar* and they quickly went on to establish themselves on the local scene. But breaking into the international market — specifically America — was another matter.

Air Supply had a first, big chance three years ago. They toured Australia as support act to Rod Stewart, then followed up by accompanying Stewart on an American tour. That meant performing at all the major venues — the Forum in Los Angeles, Madison Square Garden in New York and so on — but recording breaks in America just didn't happen.

While many other acts would have given up at that stage, Russell and Hitchcock kept plugging away and one single in particular, *Lost In Love*, was a monster hit in this country. It had almost been forgotten here when American recording mogul, Clive Davis, finally heard it. The song went to Number Two on the US charts . . . and another Australian act had just failed to reach that elusive top spot. Air Supply's second American single was to change all that, though, and create a record in Australian rock'n'roll.

Radio stations here ignored *All Out Of Love* for months, but the American programmers loved it and it shot quickly to the Number One spot.

For Australia, it then became a matter of 'better late than never.' Finally radio started giving *All Out Of Love* the exposure it had deserved all along and the record buying public responded accordingly.

Next time around, it's all likely to happen at a much faster rate.

HALL & OATES



Long regarded as one of the finest live acts in rock, Daryl Hall and John Oates have only recently started gaining wide acceptance in Australia. But their last two albums and a short tour of the eastern States in October now have them bracketed with the very top performers. *N-static* and *Voices* have swelled their following and their first Australian tour — and visit to **Countdown** — disappointed no-one.

If Australia failed to give due recognition to Hall and Oates during the 1970s, the 1980s are sure to be another matter altogether.



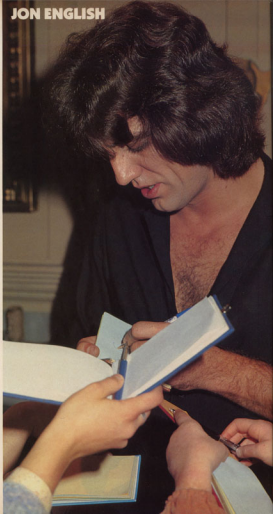
JON ENGLISH

Voted Australia's Most Popular Male Performer at the 1980 TV Week Rock Music Awards, televised as a **Countdown** special, Jon English was relatively quiet on the local scene in the latter half of the year. But, to borrow the title of one of his albums, it was just the calm before the storm.

While Jon was not topping Australian charts, his music was starting to go places in countries as far flung as Sweden, helped along by the release of the *Against The Wind* soundtrack, which he wrote and recorded with Mario Millo. And that's just the start of his success overseas. While previously recorded albums such as *Calm Before The Storm* and *English History* are being released throughout Europe, Jon will be on tour to promote them. He will also put down a new album during a planned visit to England.

The Sydney-based singer and actor, who originally broke into the big time through the role of Judas in the Australian production of *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, has reached the pinnacle in this country, but he is not one to let success overtake him. His business, he says, has to be combined with his 'other' life as a husband and father — hardly an unusual ideal, but one which many people involved in the world of rock do not live up to. When Jon English discusses that aspect of his life, though, you'd better believe that he means what he is saying.

Now much more than just established on the Australian scene, Jon English is set to take on the world and win... and not just as a rock singer. While he tends to play down his ability as an actor, his prospects as a film and TV star cannot be ignored, either



KATE BUSH

Even the most optimistic rock fans probably thought she could never do it ... When Kate Bush launched her career with *Whispering Heights* nearly three years ago, she also released one of the classic songs of the 1970s and many thought her peak already had been reached.

Happily, her latest single, *Babooshka*, and album, *Never Forever*, have proved everyone wrong. The elfin lady is living up to early predictions which acclaimed her as being one of the biggest influences of the future.

Musical and lyrical brilliance, mime, dance, sophistication ... Kate Bush.

'You get to a stage where you have to take risks.' That was Elton John talking just before the release of *21 At 33*. While being quietly happy with the album, he talked in terms of being grateful for the enthusiasm to carry on his career after ten years and so on.

Elton John's public had a totally different attitude. They were ecstatic about the album and the single cut from it, *Little Jeannie*. 'The best since *Yellow Brick Road*' was a compliment often levelled at *21 At 33* and, for once, the critics were extremely accurate. Far from being a spent force after ten years, the flamboyant Elton John is still up there with the real superstars of rock'n'roll.



ELTON JOHN



THE VAPORS

When a producer well known to the **Countdown** crew first heard a song called *Timing Japanese*, by a new English band called the Vapors, he told the people around him that it was probably the worst song he had ever heard, then left hurriedly to go from Melbourne to Sydney on business. For the next hour, strapped into a seat at 35,000 feet, he could not stop himself humming the melody over and over. *Timing Japanese*, he decided, would become a hit whether he liked it or not.

The song already was heading for Number One in England and it was not long before it did exactly the same thing in Australia. It was still in the **Countdown** Top 10 when the Vapors embarked on their first international tour. They appeared live on **Countdown** to play the song and the follow-up single, *Waiting For The Weekend*, the day after the first performance they gave outside England.

'We all hoped it would do well because we thought it was a good song, but it was sort of weird sitting back and watching it go up the charts,' bass player Steve Smith said. 'We were really surprised that it took off in Australia because no-one else in Europe was interested and it took a long time to do anything in America.'

The sales of *Timing Japanese* and the Vapors' debut album, *New Clear Days*, stamped Steve, Dave Fenton (guitar, vocals), Edward Bazalgette (guitar, vocals) and Howard Smith (drums) as the most successful new band to emerge from England in 1980. Just 12 months ago they were four guys working regular jobs and playing in a pub band at night. 'That's pretty standard where we come from,' Steve said. 'You can't live on the money from



gigs if you haven't got a record deal. When you do a pub you get about 30 quid and your expenses are about 40 quid. You have to have a job to pay your bills. But every band needs a break and ours was meeting Bruce Foxton from the Jam.'

Late last year Foxton

decided to start a pub crawl at an establishment where the Vapors just happened to be playing one of those 30 quid gigs. 'Initially he just dropped in for a couple of drinks, but he was knocked out by the band and he stayed until the end,' Steve said. 'He offered us a couple of gigs —

like third on the bill — and stayed in touch after that. Then we sent him a tape and he took it to a few record companies and they started showing a lot of interest. The advantage was that he was Bruce Foxton, so the tape at least got a play at the companies he went to. A lot of tapes just get left in the "in" tray, then go straight in the bin. There's a big recession in England at the moment and a lot of companies just don't want to sign new bands.'

The Vapors, though, were signed and they came to Australia aiming to prove the band was not a one-hit wonder, happy to get by on a gimmicky film clip. 'It's not so much that we try to stay away from gimmicks, but we try to be honest with the audience,' Steve said. 'We are just four average people, so why try to build ourselves up to be anything else? In a way some people might take that as a pose in itself, but we feel happiest not making out that we're something we're not.' Australia liked the Vapors just the way they are and a new album, scheduled for release early in 1981, has been eagerly awaited.

JO JO ZEP & THE FALCONS



For someone who says he does not want to be a huge success, Joe Camilleri has been chalking up achievements at a rate which must be starting to alarm him. His band, Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons, is no longer a group with a small but financial following, willing to go to almost any lengths to witness another live performance by their heroes. No, 1980 was the year Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons became part of the big, bad, commercialised world. Previously Joe (vocals, saxes, guitar), Jeff Burstin (guitar, vocals), Tony Faehse (guitar, vocals), Wilbur Wilde (keyboards, saxes, vocals), John Power (bass, vocals) and Gary Young (drums) seemed unable to recreate on

record the full impact of their stunning live gigs. But two 1980 albums, *Screaming Targets* and *Hats Off Step Lively*, suddenly gave the public at large something which demonstrated that they were among the best bands in the country. An international deal followed as a matter of course and, in July, Joe and the band headed off for their first ever overseas tour.

The British Press showed something of an indifference to the Falcons but, at their two London gigs, the audiences demanded three encores. The US loved the band and *Screaming Targets* and the next visit, to promote *Hats Off Step Lively*, will probably last as long as three months. Yet, despite all

that, Joe still shies away from many aspects of the industry which most bands would regard merely as the trappings of success.

'We'd hate to be a band that's a contender for a title, whatever that means,' Joe said. 'Being a musician to me is just like being a plumber, except a lot more people see you. I can understand the other point of view — people see you on TV and they think you've "made it" or stuff like that — but it's really nothing. You are just doing what you like to do. I love doing what I'm doing, but I still want to be able to walk down the street, get a tram and live simply. I don't want to be a huge success, where playing becomes secondary.'

Joe also refuses to become

part of any fad and, at the moment, he sees the fact that he is part of an Australian band as something of a danger in that respect. 'We could suffer a backlash,' he said. 'Australian material is so popular now that it's become a fad and I want to stay away from fads as much as possible. You can get sucked into them so easily, but you're around for only a short time.'

'We've stayed away from fads and that's why we've been around for five years and we've seen 'em go up, then watched 'em come down. As long as our band is respected for what it does I'll be happy.'

There doesn't seem to be much danger facing Joe and friends in that department.

VILLAGE PEOPLE

You can see an amazing variety of people and hear an endless variety of music in the teeming streets of New York's Greenwich Village.

The panhandlers still use that old 'dime for a cup of coffee' line — although it's doubtful that a dime would cover the price of the sugar these days — and the bars, with names such as Kenny's Cantaways, the Gaslight and Bells Of Hell, are world famous for their music.

In one you might find a middle-aged black couple lovingly playing their own version of the blues. In another you might see a latter-day folk devotee, hoping that one day the world will discover him and his message à la Bob Dylan or Peter, Paul and Mary in the 1960s. In yet another you'll see a raw rock band or find 100 different interpretations of 'being freaky' on one dance floor.

It was in the Village that producer and songwriter Jacques Morali first saw Felipe Rose, done up in Indian head-dress and war paint and doing his own thing to the backing of the disco boom. A concept sprang to life in Morali's alert mind and, soon after, he had teamed the Indian with a construction worker, a leather freak, a cowboy, a GI and a policeman.

He recorded them under the apt title of *Village People* and Australia first saw this odd assortment in action in 1978 — on *Countdown*. By the end of 1979 they were one of the world's hottest disco acts and, by 1980, they were movie stars, too.

Grease producer Allan Carr jumped on the Village People bandwagon and co-starred them in a movie *Can't Stop The Music* with top actress Valerie Perrine and Bruce Jenner, America's decathlon Gold Medalist at the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

The movie had its world



premiere in Sydney in June and that meant an Australian tour by Village People.

'Jacques literally picked people to go on a promotional tour for the music in the first place,' leather-clad Glenn Hughes explained when the band

appeared live on *Countdown* just hours before the *Can't Stop The Music* world premiere. 'Then the need to have a full-time group became obvious because the market was there. It was like auditioning for a part in a play, really.

Jacques knew the characters he wanted and he just had to find the right people to fill the roles.'

These days, being a member of Village People is more than full-time job. 'I'd had some experience of movies when I made an



appearance in a French film,' Hughes said. 'I knew it meant being around for about twelve hours a day and working for only about twenty minutes of those twelve hours. I worked on the French film for thirteen days, but *Can't Stop The Music* took four and a half months. And when we weren't actually filming, we couldn't even sit around . . . we had to stand all the time so we wouldn't crush our costumes. While all that was going on, we were working on a new album about six hours each night, too. They promised us a month off after the movie. It went out of production on November 15 and we left for a five-week European tour on November 17!'

Village People finally got their month off early in 1980 but, with the premiere of *Can't Stop The Music* and their tour, the grueling schedules started all over.

After leaving Australia they became part of a *Can't Stop The Music* promotion which covered forty-two American cities in just thirty days — performing live on television and doing endless television, radio and print media interviews.

'We have our good days and our bad days,' Hughes said with a look which spelt out that this was not one of his good days. 'When we're on tour, most of us have to organise each entire day just around the show that night. There's no time for much else. It takes Felipe more than an hour just to get made up. And you don't have any choice about staying fit. Everyone has their own food and exercise program.'

Is it all worthwhile then? 'Only time will tell' was Glenn Hughes' reply.

Time had already told in Australia. Village People were, and still are, an enormous success story.

THE BOOMTOWN RATS

"It's a basic law of physics that for every action there's a reaction, so for every kid who thinks I'm uppity there's someone else who thinks it's fun. . . . Even if it's a reaction, I think it means that people haven't switched on their electronic Valium and sat there like drug fiends just absorbing it. They actually reacted and I think it's healthy."

Boomtown Rat Bob Geldof talking — something he does a lot and something which, as far as provoking reaction is concerned, he has down to a fine art.

One only had to see the two editions of **Countdown** on which he appeared during 1980 to come to that conclusion. The first, taped in Melbourne, caused uproar. Geldof, lead singer of the Irish group which had enormous success in 1979 with *I Don't Like Mondays*, was on tour and out to ensure that both he and his band were noticed.

He slated the Split Enz single *I Got You Number One* on the **Countdown** chart for a record eight weeks; he told us the only thing he knew about Jimmy and the Boys was that the band looked like it was doing a heavy endorsement for Jockeytes; he said Holland, the home of the Veterans, was boring; and, in the finish, he said something else which had to be bleeped. The quotes you see here are being bleeped, too.

"I mean, Molly came over to me later and said it was all his fault, that he should have been there to explain things to me before rehearsals started. And I said, "——, I would have still said the same things, they're my opinions you know." And then he said that I shouldn't be so blunt and I told him, "Look, you have to be diplomatic, I don't. It's water off a ——— duck's back, to be honest with you."

Yet, after all the hassles, Bob Geldof returned to **Countdown** just two weeks later. "I went back to do an interview with Molly about how the tour was going," he explained. "I wasn't even going to talk about the first show. Molly thought it would be a good idea to go back and do an interview to show people that, apart from all that ———, you can still be friends and talk. I thought that was a bit corny but, nevertheless, it was another week on **Countdown**."

Geldof went back and was doing the interview at the start of a show which Gary Numan was to have compered in Brisbane when, as Geldof explained it, "the next minute, old Gazza Numan got locked in the toilet putting on his make-up and couldn't make the plane. So, here I was, sitting amongst all these ludicrous pyramids on the set, and they asked me to stay and do the show. I said I would if they got rid of the pyramids and got another set. I said, "Why

don't you lower down a big blackboard and I'll come on with a piece of chalk and do noughts and crosses on it, because we have noughts and crosses on our stage lighting set." We tried that and, I had to agree with them, it didn't work. It looked really tacky. Then I said I'd do the show anyway if they took out Gary Numan's film clip."

Right, Bob Geldof does not balk when it comes to saying what he thinks. A former music journalist, he formed the Boomtown Rats





Cost (guitars), Johnny Fingers (keyboards), Pete Briquette (bass) and Simon Crowe (drums).

But as far as the media are concerned, anyway, Bob Geldof is the Boomtown Rats. 'And I think that's a scandal,' he said. 'The others are equally intelligent, equally valuable . . . and equally boring. What insults me — more than it does the others — is that journalists think they are getting second best if they have to talk to one of the others.'

So, what does the rest of the band think? 'They think, "Well, Geldof can do all the interviews. That's one more boring chore we don't have to worry about"'. And I think it's a — cop-out and it irritates me.

Despite that, Geldof is not about to stop giving interviews as long as it means more exposure for the Boomtown Rats. And he's not about to stop being as direct as he was during the Rats' tour of Australia.

'I'm not outspoken, but I would say I'm dogmatic. I see things in very black and white terms. I don't sit on the fence and the reason I don't sit on the fence is because both sides shoot at you. It can be a dangerous stance to take, though.'

'I would say that, if I was interviewing me, I wouldn't be able to stand myself. But if somebody asks me a question I try to answer it definitely, as honestly as I can. I would not lie about anything. You can ask me any question and I'll answer it but, if that offends people, then that's tough. I'm not going to start kotowing to other people, even if it gets me into lots and lots and lots of trouble. It does get me into trouble — constantly, all the time — and I get fed up with it. And I wish I could keep my mouth shut.'

in Ireland after being thrown out of Canada — twelve months after he had been working there illegally as music editor of a 'sort of Canadian *Rolling Stone*'.

He went back to Ireland, rustled up a few mates who lived close by and they started playing a few songs together one Saturday afternoon. They had several Number One hits in the UK and the line-up with which Geldof achieved the same prominence in Australia is Garry Roberts and Gerry

ALICE COOPER

Alice Cooper has never been terribly shy about his hang-ups . . . in fact most have ended up as the themes of his various albums. And, if you're wondering what a nice ghoul like Alice is doing in a book like this, the answer is that he's simply clowning around as usual.

And, while 1989 might not have been his most successful year, he is proving he is still one of rock's great originals.

An aircraft which left right on time cost **Countdown** the chance of having Gary Numan as a compere earlier this year, but he was still a major part of several shows through his film clips.

Numan, dubbed the 'face of the 80s', is now right up there with the biggest superstars in the UK — despite the dislike that some of them obviously have for him — and is gaining wider and wider acceptance in America. Singles such as *We Are Glass* and albums such as *The Pleasure Principle* and his latest, *Telêfon*, look like ensuring that he will be a top drawcard in Australia for a long time to come.



GARY NUMAN



Long established as one of the foremost rock singers and writers in New Zealand, Sharon O'Neill is now starting to make her mark on the rest of the world, starting with Australia. She first visited this country — and **Countdown** — early in the year with her single *Birds* and self-titled album, then followed up with the sensitive *Talk To Boys*.

Sharon O'Neill now looks certain to gain as much acceptance for her songwriting as her singing. Add to that the fact that the lady is more than at home on keyboards, and you wind up with a very attractive package of talent. Australia should be her springboard to more far-reaching, international success.



SHARON O'NEILL





Tragedy and triumph — that's been the year for AC/DC. Bon Scott had never been a man to live life at a pace any less than hectic and his legendary boozing

habits had become almost as much part of his image as his powerhouse vocals and somewhat menacing presence out front of the band. Still, at the start of

1980, with AC/DC firmly entrenched as a Number One band in the UK and Europe and American prospects looking good, no-one expected that Bon wouldn't be around to see the band's eventual, global take-over of the charts.

The rock world reeled in shock in February when the news broke that Bon had taken that one step too far over the top ... and died. To the present ... and the title of the band's first album with new singer Brian Johnson — *Back In Black* — is a tribute to Bon. That the album took the world by storm is a tribute to Angus and Malcolm Young, Phil Rudd, Cliff Williams and, of course, Johnson. The new man in AC/DC is an earthy character who seems to have had a battered, flat cap grafted onto his skull. The comparisons are unavoidable and, yes, he does sound more than a little like Bon but he has become his own identity in AC/DC.

The band's trademark, though, remains the rebellious, wayward schoolboy figure, also known as Angus Young. When The Who's Pete Townshend, among the ultimate heroes of rock'n'roll, said Angus could become 'the Pete Townshend of the 1980s', some started thinking that the man responsible for classics such as *Tommy* had finally let his ego run away with him. But, really, Townshend could not have paid Angus a higher compliment. What's more, his prediction has already just about come true.

AC/DC, still possessing all the power represented by the very name of the band, are scheduled to tour Australia early in 1981. Someone with an unusual name for a bloke and well known to **Countdown** fans already has shot his mouth off and said the tour could be bigger than the November invasion by Kiss. That prediction, too, just might come true.

JOHN TRAVOLTA



Hard to believe. The slightly nervous, extremely quiet young man in the double-breasted suit was the same guy responsible for movies which have grossed hundreds of millions of dollars. Both *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease* are among the top box office successes of all time and both starred John Travolta. Since then he has been involved in one flop—

Moment By Moment, opposite Lily Tomlin—and then came *Urban Cowboy*. The movie not only got John Travolta dancing again, but it also brought together some of America's top country and country cross-over musicians to produce a magnificent score. The Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Bonnie Raitt, the Charlie Daniels Band, Joe Walsh and JD Souther were

just some of the highly respected acts who contributed to the soundtrack of the movie set in Pasadena, Texas, site of the infamous Gilley's bar. Travolta played Bud, an oil refinery worker by day and a cowboy—at least as far as his appearances at Gilley's were concerned—by night. A Screen Actors' Guild strike in the US in

August saw him decide to jangle his spurs around other parts of the world to promote the film. England, France, Spain, Germany, Italy... and Australia were worked into his itinerary. Travolta made two special appearances for **Countdown** during his brief Australian visit, one to be reunited with his *Grease* co-star, Olivia Newton-John, during the Countdown Xanadu National Dance Contest Final, the second to co-compere the following show with 'Molly' Meldrum.

Two of the biggest stars in the world on two consecutive shows. Travolta is credited with starting the disco scene as it is today but, in his own, very shy manner, he sidesteps the suggestion. 'That's interesting, because when we were making *Saturday Night Fever*, disco in the States was on the way out,' he said. 'It had been ever-present for six years, seven years, and even the clothing I wore in *Fever* was five years old... stuff I wore when I went to school. I look at it all as a resurgence, not an origination.'

Whatever, *Fever* made Travolta a movie star as well as one of the most popular characters on TV, a title he earned through the comedy series, *Welcome Back Kotter*. *Grease* followed and it's doubtful that even a movie as entertaining as *Urban Cowboy* will emulate that degree of success. Nevertheless, *Cowboy* did manage to earn a \$40 million-plus gross before the end of 1980 and the soundtrack shot to Number One on charts around the world quicker than a mechanical bull could throw a greenhorn cowboy. And John Travolta had danced his way through 1970s discos, 1950s high schools and 1980s redneck clubs... and remained a superstar.

RICHARD CLAPTON

Richard Clapton is, simply, one of the most talented singer-songwriters Australian rock'n'roll has produced to date.

After returning to Australia in mid-1979, a year in the US and a new album under his belt, Richard toured to support his *Hearts On The Nightline* set then suddenly disappeared. The reason was that he spent most of the first half of 1980 locked in a Sydney studio. He emerged in May with *Dark Spaces*, his first album as a performer and producer. Again, the nine tracks only further re-affirmed the fact that, artistically, Richard is among the top achievers.

'I suppose the main difference with this album is that I produced it myself' Richard said after performing the first single cut from the set, *Get Back To The Shelter*, on *Countdown*. 'I think the difference shows. It's probably got a bit more of an edge than the other albums, I'd say. Producing myself has never been a big thing with me but I thought that, one day when the timing was right, I'd try it out of interest's sake more than anything else. I have got an interest in producing for other people.'

Richard did not emerge unscathed from the experiment and will probably think more than twice before repeating the performance. 'It got to be a little bit too much like hard work' he said without any trace of a smile. 'You have to play more than two roles. When you're the artist, you just have to perform. When you're the producer, too, you have got to administer and conceive the way the music is eventually going to turn out and it's very difficult. There's a hell of a lot of pressure.'

Still, the experience did allow him to forge his own path away from what he

refers to as 'my rigid musical style'. Albums such as *Girls On The Avenue* and *Goodbye Tiger*, despite the acclaim with which they were received, tended to slot him.

'It's easy to get locked in and everything becomes too similar to everything else' he said. 'On my last two albums I've been fighting really hard to get away from a set style and I think I achieved it to an

extent. This last album is a lot more up, although some of the songs are in the same vein as a lot of other stuff I've done. Writing lyrics is easy for me, but I've found it very hard to write music outside that structure that I've become known for.'

And so it might be hard. The results, though, are very easy on most ears.



ROCKY BURNETTE



Rocky Burnette has two big soap-boxes — and he doesn't mind who sees him standing on them.

The first is heavy drugs, a social problem which helped kill two 'wild and crazy' guys he loved ... his father, Johnny, and uncle, Dorsey.

'They were both big names in the 'fifties but they got into the drug scene too deep,' Rocky said. 'It all

started innocently — they'd be all keyed up working on something late at night and they'd take something to stay awake. Then they'd take downers so they could sleep. Before a few years were out, they were hooked ... hooked heavy. I don't know whether you know what decadence is, but if you took two or three right now you'd be buzzed out for two days. You

wouldn't be able to sleep, your lips would be chattering and your heart would be beating twice as fast as normal. My Dad and Dorsey were taking eighty and ninety of them a day ... eighty and ninety! I've seen them stay up for five and six days straight, then sleep non-stop for four days. They'd literally be in a coma. It wasn't all heaven around my house. There was an awful lot of hell.'

Johnny Burnette, the man considered to be the innovator of rockabilly music, died in a freak boating accident — not from a drug overdose — but Rocky said his father's drug habits had reached a stage where 'he lacked the common sense you need to be out in a fishing boat. It's not all games when you're out on the water. It can be serious stuff, and dangerous.'

Dorsey Burnette died after a heart attack which, according to Rocky, 'happened because he probably had the heart of a ninety-year-old man after all the speed he'd been taking.'

Rocky's other soap-box is industrial strikes ... and they've affected his career, particularly in England.

'Tired of Toesin' *The Line* was the most played song in England last year, but it stayed at Number Fifty with a bullet on the charts for eight weeks in a row, then it petered out. The record pressing plant went on strike, so they had no copies of the record to sell.

'Every time I release a record in England the pressing plant goes on strike. Three times in a row, three days after I've released a record, it's happened.'

Australia was a little kinder to the affable American with the ready smile — *Tired of Toesin' The Line*, the first Australian single from Rocky's *Son Of Rock'n'Roll* album, reached Number One

in this country, his first Number One anywhere in the world.

'Last year I couldn't afford a tuna fish sandwich. I was living in the back of my car wishing to hell that I had a couple of bucks to buy a Big Mac or something,' Rocky mused. 'I'm just a bum who got lucky, honest to goodness. You need talent, too, but there are a lot of people who've made it big without a stitch of talent. I might be a one-hit wonder, who knows ...'

Australia obviously doesn't go along with that sentiment and neither do some extremely well-connected people in the US recording industry. One close friend is the legendary guitar player Duane Eddy, who Rocky met through his Uncle Dorsey. Rocky had hoped to persuade him to come to Australia on tour next year, but Eddy is now virtually retired to his luxury home in the Nevada resort of Lake Tahoe.

'When I was doing my album I phoned him and said, "Hey, there are some perfect Duane Eddy licks I'd like you to do for me", and he said "Oh, son, you know how to play those old licks as well as anybody. You do 'em and if you want to put my name on the album cover, go ahead and do it. But I don't feel like moving just now".'

With or without Duane Eddy, Rocky will be touring early in 1981 with his band, a follow-up to his promotional tour last July.

'I'll be back to tour with the Little River Band hopefully,' he said. 'It's all tentative now, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed.'

So are his legions of fans in Australia.

Split Enz did not win anything at the 1980 TV Week Rock Music Awards, which were televised live on **Countdown**.

But, when the band came on stage to perform the rapidly selling single *I Got You*, Melbourne's packed Comedy Theatre literally went wild. That was back in April. Soon after the song shot to Number One on the **Countdown** chart and stayed there for a record eight weeks. And both the single and the *True Colours* album from which it was lifted went on to ship more than 300,000 units.

That put Split Enz among the elite acts in Australian recording history. Most people expected the Enz to release the pop-orientated *Poor Boy or What's The Matter With You* as the follow-up to *I Got You*, but the band decided on an entirely different direction. The beautiful ballad, *I Hope I Never*, written by Tim Finn and featuring his incredible vocals, was cut from the album and it, too, went on to become a huge hit.

It was helped along to some extent by a film clip produced in the **Countdown** studios and, if you couldn't find keyboards player Eddie Rayner each time you saw it, stop worrying.

'I was sick the morning it was done,' Eddie said. 'For a while there I was trying to start a rumor that I was dead, but no-one would believe me. Anyway, we thought it was a good choice for the second single off the album. It was chancy, but we've never been a band to do the obvious.' That is something of an understatement.

Split Enz has never been a mainstream rock group from the day the band emerged in New Zealand more than seven years ago. Now, though, the costumes have become slightly less outrageous and the haircuts a





little more — can the word be used? — normal. Those visible changes of direction and their sixth album gave Split Enz the mass recognition they had sought and deserved for so long.

Eddie Rayner agrees that the sudden across-the-board success is due to a variety of reasons. 'I think we realised that we wouldn't be able to survive much longer without a certain amount of commercial success,' he said. 'We had to realise that within ourselves before we could do anything about it. Then there was Neil Finn (Tim's young brother) coming through with a few songs and becoming a bit of a star within the band. Then there was Tickle . . .'

David Tickle is the brilliant young producer from Britain who came to Australia to work on *True Colours* with the Enz late in 1979. He also produced the *Aliens* album, *Transcendental*, before returning to England, but was back in Australia in the middle of 1980 to work on another Split Enz set. He has engineering credits on albums by notables such as Blondie and the Knack.

'We first heard about him from a friend of ours when we were in England,' Eddie said. 'Not long after that we were offered some free studio time at the place where he was working and he engineered *I See Red* for us. We really liked that sound and we really wanted him to produce an album for us.'

It took a while for the band to talk Munhroom Records boss Michael Gudinski into the idea, but no-one is arguing about the results now. Eddie Rayner, Tim Finn (vocals, guitar, piano) and Noel Crombie (vocals, percussion and loads of ideas) are the only three original members of Split Enz. Phil Judd left about three years ago and was replaced by Neil Finn (vocals, guitar and the

composer of *I Get You*) and the original New Zealand rhythm section was replaced by Englishmen Malcolm Green (drums) and Nigel Griggs (bass).

After paying his dues and more, Eddie seems a little bemused by the band's rocket-like rise to the top of the charts in 1980.

'Everything goes around in circles,' he said. 'I've been in this band a quarter of my life — more than seven years — and we've just had our first Number One. If I'm still in the band in another seven years' time . . .'

Pessimistic thinking but, then again, Eddie Rayner knows what it's like not to be successful. Still, it's doubtful whether his next seven years will be as much of a struggle as the past seven. Split Enz are signed to A and M Records for American and European release and the band set off towards the end of 1980 to put in some work on international audiences.

It's certain that they will want to be back in Australia when the 1981 TV Week Rock Awards roll around, though, because they are likely to scoop the pool.



BILLY JOEL



Billy Joel in 1980 did exactly what he has done in the years since he first broke into the charts with *Piano Man* ... remained one of the top singer-songwriters in the world. The dark-haired New Yorker released *Glass Houses*, an album which contained a wealth of material suitable for singles, and, in the US at least, seemed to fight a

running battle with another singer-piano player — a guy called Elton John — for chart positions. Billy Joel won.

There are rumours of another Australian tour by Joel early in 1981, but rumours come and go. Others become reality, so many will be hoping the latter is the case as far as this performer is concerned.

IRENE CARA



Compared with *Can't Stop The Music* and *Nanadu*, *Fame* was a movie released with the minimum of hype. In fact, the appearance of the movie on the Australian cinema scene created hardly a ripple at first, but the reverberations are likely to be heard for a long time to come. The reason is the emergence of Irene Cara —

from virtual obscurity in Broadway and off-Broadway productions to a stage where she is set to become one of the superstars of the 1980s. The backing of Australian entrepreneur, Robert Stigwood, should ensure that before long Irene Cara will make her mark internationally in a big, big way.

MENTAL AS ANYTHING



At one stage, a certain Melbourne radio station refused to play the song because it would have been 'bowing to **Countdown's** tastes', but both **Countdown** and *Mental As Anything* persisted ... and *Gene Aread* became a hit.

The slightly eccentric band, which broke into the charts initially with *The Nips Are Getting Bigger*, tends to

laugh at anything even remotely serious, but that hasn't stopped the group becoming a big force on the local scene. The Mentals have made big inroads in England, too, and it's not likely to be very long before they become yet another Australian band which manages to crack the international scene.

ROLLING STONES



Almost 20 years on ... and the Rolling Stones are still living up to their reputation as the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world.

Emotional Rescue was to have been the make or break

Queen in the 1980s, the decade which would see rock return to the basics, just could not survive as a chartbusting band. That's what the critics said, anyway ... then along came *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*. The song did return to the basics and Queen was back at Number One. An album, *The Game*, followed and Queen just might have been having a slight dig at their critics by that very title. Whether or not that's true, songs such as *Save Me* again proved Queen still highly acceptable.

album for the Stones and, as soon as it was released, the world gave it the thumbs up. It shot to Number One on the US and British charts and the title track, released as a single, jumped quickly into

the **Countdown** Top Ten. The elder statesmen of rock have lost none of their charisma, none of their ability to produce albums that can be classified only among the very best. Mick

Jagger, interviewed by **Countdown's** London connection, Cherry Ripe, was one of the few superstars in the world who, some time in 1980, did not remind Ian Meldrum to behave.



HEROES



Any young band with talent enough to capture the attention of producers-performers Harry Vanda and George Young has to be on the way to chart success even before they start work in the

recording studios. And that's the way it was for Newcastle band Heroes. Vanda and Young went to Newcastle to see Mark Timson and Peter de Jong (guitars, vocals), James Porteous (bass) and Phil

Screen (drums) in action half way through 1980 and came away more than impressed. They produced the A side of Heroes' debut single, *Baby's Had A Taste*, and the band was away. A self-titled

album followed and a band that most of Australia hadn't heard of until late 1980 is now set to be one of the major forces of 1981.



The Police turn up in the most unlikely places . . . Early in 1980 the locations were a little more conventional than this — the stages of Australia's major rock venues and the set of

Countdown are a long way from any pyramids. The band amazed Australian audiences with the sheer power of its three-piece output and the singles *Walking On The Moon* and

Message In A Bottle sold accordingly. *Regatta De Blanc* became one of the biggest albums of the first half of the year and the previous Police set, *Outlandos D'Amour*, started selling after originally

being ignored by Australia.

Zenyatta Mendatta put them back on the scene later in the year and perhaps early 1981 is a ripe time for another Police raid on this country.

THE INNOCENTS

The years between 1970 and 1978 are almost a blank as far as Sydney-based band The Innocents are concerned. In fact, try to talk to the band's Charlie Touver and David Minchin (guitars), Greg Cracknell (bass) and Derek Fairbrass (drums) about the music of those years and your questions will fall on deaf ears. They were years not noted for the production of concise pop songs and that's the type of music The Innocents are into.

The band, which first emerged from Tasmania using the name Beethoven, relies on relatively simple guitar work and close, three-part vocal harmonies, much the same as the sound of the early Beatles.

'We have our roots in the music of the 'sixties, bands like the Beatles, the Who and the Kinks,' Charlie Touver said. 'We've always thought that most of the music from 1970 to 1978 was pretty boring, but since '78 we've liked the English bands such as the Undertones, the Records and UK Squeeze. Rock 'n' roll really turned its back on itself after 1970 and a lot of the spontaneity and excitement didn't come back into it until after '78. We're basically about having fun with short, concise songs.'

David Minchin believes many musicians who reached the top from 1970 to 1978 forgot that their audiences were part of the music. 'They started playing only for themselves,' he said. 'They were so-called virtuosos — introverted musicians who were self-indulgent.'

Despite the fact that they were writing and recording material blatantly aimed at the programmers of mainstream radio, The Innocents deny that they have 'sold out' in any way.

'We've been writing songs for years and we're primarily songwriters who are strongly into contemporary pop,'



Minchin said. 'We are writing the type of songs we like to write. We have artistic control and we are adamant about what we do musically. If that's tailored to radio, well and good.'

The reaction to the band's single, *Sooner Or Later*, when

they performed on **Countdown** was a strong indication that The Innocents are not the only ones who like what they're doing.

They say they are 'making music for the kids' — and that means they are playing with the preferences of a

huge percentage of the record-buying public firmly in mind.

Their first album, due early in 1981, should cement them among Australia's most popular young groups.



B-52s

debut album, and he'll start telling you about the night he saw some slides of happy babies, cooked steaks and lobsters on the wall of a disco. That profound experience gave him the idea for the song. The *Rock Lobster* film clip, which helped the single onto the charts in a big way, was made on the set of a defunct Dutch science fiction series.

Ask Kate Pierson about the other hit from the album *Planet Clare* and she'll tell you straight out that Clare is the sixtieth planet from the sun. What that extra-terrestrial trivia has to do with rock music, no-one is sure!

The B-52s first started making people dance in Athens, Georgia, where they formed a band to play mainly at friends' parties. Now their parties usually have thousands of paying guests.

The band's debut album stayed around a long while because of something of a cult following before it exploded onto the mainstream charts — in Australia first, then America. It brought with it a whole new dance craze as the disco freaks started copying the movements of the energetic Cindy, Kate and Fred. It also brought with it a whole new range of vocals sounds, mainly from Kate.

'I practise all those different sounds in the bathtub,' she confided. 'And I'm very interested in birds.'

Kate was the reigning Queen of the B-52s during 1980, a title she inherited from Cindy at the start of the year. The mind boggles about prospects for 1981 — but, then again, the mind boggles at the B-52s!

The band which formed because its members started going to parties together and which never meant to break into the big time — only into people's lounge-rooms, according to Fred — is here to stay.

First off, you just have to look at them. One glimpse, in fact, and it's hard to take your eyes off them. Then, you hear their music... and you just have to dance.

The B-52s — Fred Schneider (vocals, organ, keyboard bass, guitar), Kate

Pierson (vocals, organ, keyboard bass, guitar), Cindy Wilson (vocals, percussion, guitar), Ricky Wilson (guitars) and Keith Strickland (drums) — were one of the craziest and most refreshingly different bands to emerge in 1980.

They classify their music — in all seriousness — as 'dance rock'n'roll'. Fair enough, but that's where being serious, about anything, abruptly stops. Ask Fred Schneider about *Rock Lobster*, the biggest single off their self-titled

JANIS IAN

Tiny Janis Ian must be the envy of the entire Kiss Army — her next door neighbour in New York is none other than the band's fiery bass player, Gene Simmons.

'Oh Gene ... yeah. I sang on his album, so we see each other once in a while' Janis said. 'We hang out at the same restaurants sometimes. I think it's funny, the whole Kiss thing. Really, the whole concept is laughable, but they all have a good time and the kids love it ... the Kiss Army marches out and the Kiss Army marches in. It doesn't hurt anybody.'

Janis is rarely home in New York to be worried by any of Gene's — or her own — fans hammering on the door at the apartment building in which they both live. After her Australian tour in June-July, she returned to America but immediately started an extensive tour around the country. Then she went to South Africa before recording an album to follow up *Night Rains*. Almost every spare moment while she is on tour she spends at work writing new material.

'I'm writing all the time' she said. 'Billy Joel is the only guy I know who's not like that. If he has an album to do he just locks himself away for two weeks and writes the songs. I envy him, but I can't do that.'

It's history that Janis wrote her first major hit *Society's Child* when she was only fourteen and that three years later she won two Grammy Awards for the haunting *At Seventeen*. At twenty-nine she is still producing high quality material, as the success of *Fly Too High*, *The Other Side of the Sun* and the *Night Rains* album proves.

Fly Too High was the result of a unique tie-up between Janis and Giorgio Moroder, the man responsible for the production of albums by the disco greats such as



Dorinda Summer.

'I always wanted to work with him since I heard the first album he did with Donna, then my lawyer ran into him at the Midem (France) music conference. He mentioned it and it turned out that Giorgio wanted to work with me ... or a lyricist of that scope or calibre or whatever. It was just as simple as that.'

As well as being the first single cut from *Night Rains*, *Fly Too High* turned up on the soundtrack of the movie *Foxes*, starring Jodie Foster, the teenager who stunned the

cinema world with her performance opposite Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver*.

'It was actually done for *Foxes*,' Janis explained. 'I had seen a rough cut of the film twice before I wrote the song, but it didn't really have to follow the story in the film so much. It had to be about anybody who thinks they are going to get one thing, but gets something else. And I can't explain any further. Once I start explaining, everybody loses interest.'

Janis Ian herself lost interest for a while and, accordingly, her career took

something of a nose dive. Now she is back with a vengeance, relaxed and the exact opposite to the 'difficult' reputation which preceded her to Australian stages and the set of **Countdown**.

'Working here is great,' she said after rehearsing *The Other Side of the Sun* at the ABC's Melbourne studios. 'You wink at a cameraman and he smiles back at you. I've worked on a lot of TV shows where everyone is scared of everyone else. Not here.'

RENEE GEYER



Minutes, one of her first efforts at composing.

'I've had to get out of Australia to grow a bit' Renee said. 'I had a bit of an identity crisis when I wanted to try out new things. I would never have written *Hot Minutes* in Australia.'



Anyone who'd heard what I was doing would have remembered songs like *Stars* and *Whispers* and thought *Hot Minutes* was too different for me to be doing it. In America I'm not judged by my past record because I haven't got one. I enjoy the anonymity ... but I do miss the recognition. I really like that when I go back to Australia and Melbourne, particularly, has been really loyal to me.'

Renee's work in America has given her added confidence as a performer here and she's hoping that will rub off on her performances throughout the rest of the world. But meanwhile, the album has been hard work.

'We financed it ourselves' she said. 'Rob is taking it to the record companies as a finished product and trying to get a deal. As far as industry recognition goes in the States I've done really well because of the amount of session work I've been doing, but the whole record company thing is really dodgy. Rob's contacts are pretty good, though.'

Hopefully she's right.

Renee Geyer has reached a moment of truth in her career. No-one could ever doubt the talent of this tall lady with the power-packed vocal range and certainly she has been in the top echelon of female singers in Australia since the mid-1970s, but now Renee has set herself new goals. It remains to be seen whether she will have the luck, timing and contacts, though, to make the big time in the United States.

Renee spent ten months in Los Angeles from late 1979, trying to find the right record producer, doing session

work and writing songs with some friends, including expatriate Australian John Capek. Before returning to Australia for a **Countdown** appearance and a short tour in July-August, 1980, she did manage to clinch a deal with one of the best producers in the business, Rob Fraboni.

In the past few months they have been working together on an album at Shangri La, the Malibu Studios which have won a place in rock'n'roll history because *The Band* recorded there. In the meantime she released the single *Hot*



DAVID BOWIE

David Bowie — just the mention of the name conjures up images of rock's avant-garde.

Bowie has not changed with the times. Oh no, Bowie has changed at his own, sometimes bewildering, pace and the times have followed him. And the most influential rock star of the 1970s has forced his way into the 1980s with some remarkable new achievements.

Scary Monsters, his first album of the new decade, is the start of what we are going to hear a lot of bands and singers try to emulate in some way over the next 12 months. But who knows where Bowie will be — or what he will be doing — by the time they have all caught up? For the moment, he can be content with the success of *Scary Monsters* and the singles *Ashes To Ashes* and *Fashion*. At the same time he has made a stunning and highly acclaimed Broadway debut in the play *The Elephant Man*, the true story of grotesquely deformed sideshow freak John Merrick.

Next up, he could be branching out into an entirely different medium of expression. For some time he has wanted to stage an exhibition of his expressionist paintings but for now he says he is still mustering the courage.

"Art . . . that's a whole different kettle of poisons," he said. "I know my music is good, but with my paintings I am in another world. And in that world I feel rather dwarfed."

All that leaves Bowie, relaxed more than ever when Ian McEldrum spoke to him in New York in October, thinking only for the present. And that's the way he likes it.

"I think about now, not later," he said. "This has led me to have a pretty interesting life so far. It has led me not to have ties with

any one country or city and I have never felt I have to settle down. Things just happen and I accept them."

One thing certain to happen in 1982 — and which Bowie just might accept — is an offer to tour Australia. He openly expresses a dislike of being on the road with a band but his new excursion

into the world of legitimate theatre could lead him back to this country. Whether he is performing out front of a band or portraying the tragic John Merrick won't matter. Australians will flock to see him anyway.



MOTELS



recording its debut album.

'To tell you the truth, it was amazing how quickly we got the deal,' sultry singer-guitarist Martha Davis said. 'All the songs on the first album were already written and we signed the contract on a Sunday — it was Mothers' Day, 1979. The reason we were able to go into the studio the next day was that our producer was so confident that Capitol was going to sign this band that he had gone out and booked the studio time weeks before. It was just coincidence that we started recording the day after we signed.'

Total Control, the Top 10 single of the album, was written in Martha's bedroom. 'Well, that's where I wrote the lyrics and, believe it or not, it was going to be a punk rock song. I was kind of angry at the time.'

The Motels' current album, *Careful*, is an even better example of the group's songwriting and playing talents but the first single lifted from it, *Danger*, almost wasn't included on the set.

'That's a strange song because I wrote it for the Pointer Sisters,' Martha said. 'My lawyer called me and said they were looking for songs, but when Tim (McGovern) our guitar player heard it he said it was a good song and he wrote some really neat parts to go with it and we made it a joint effort. I played it for someone at the Pointer Sisters' record company, but I don't think they ever personally heard it.' While the Motels' self-titled debut album and *Careful* have been great showcases for the band, their live performances have been even better, as Martha, McGovern, Brian Glascott (drums), Marty Gerard (keyboards, saxophone) and Michael Goodrow (bass) proved in Australia recently.

And here's hoping they check in again.



When the Motels got together as a band they were prepared to play around the Los Angeles area for up to two years to make enough money to put together a demonstration tape to hawk around the recording companies. It took just six weeks for the band to be offered a contract and start



'I just thought to myself, "Damn it, I'm really going to go for it". So I did . . .'

John Farnham, after fourteen years in the business, decided that 1980 would be the year he made a concerted effort to put himself back on top in Australia and crack the international scene.

His album *Uncovered* went a long way towards achieving both aims. Farnham put the album down at the same time as he was taping the Farnham And Byrne TV series, shown nationally on the ABC in August and co-starring Debbie Byrne. 'If I wasn't working seven days a week for the ABC in Sydney I was in Melbourne working on the album,' he said. 'It's been worth it — we've got a diversified, contemporary album. I think the most contemporary thing I've ever done.'

Farnham recorded under the production guidance of Little River Band guitarist-songwriter Graham Goble, who wrote five numbers on *Uncovered* and had a hand in a couple of others. 'He's a genius . . . fantastic,' Farnham said.

'He's had me singing flat out all the time, but I've really enjoyed it. He writes great stuff and he's a really great record producer.'

The album and TV series completed, Farnham started looking at his prospects with a renewed energy, and a type of enthusiasm that was evident early in his long career. And it's obvious that the major reasons behind his new keenness were his association with Goble and Glenn Wheatley, the manager responsible for LRB's international rise. 'I've never had a real shot at the overseas market ever, but now I'm in the right frame of mind, in the right management situation and I've got the right material to give it a go. There are a few things happening for me. Glenn has built up a lot of credibility overseas with LRB and if some of that rubs off on me, well and good. Glenn and I have known each other for years and we'd been talking about the possibility of getting together for some time. Finally it happened . . .'

It was November, 1967, when John Farnham first shot to the top of the Australian charts with *Sadie The Closing Lady*. 'Frightening, isn't it?' he remarked. 'Still, I love the old girl. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for her.'

Since those early days, few have doubted the man's talent and sheer ability as a singer. Still, there have been a lot of ups and downs in John Farnham's career — at one stage he didn't even have a recording contract, an incomprehensible situation considering that many people in the rock industry regard him as unquestionably the best singer in Australia.

Uncovered was an apt title for Farnham's return to the recording business. The real, brilliant, John Farnham finally stood up and walked to centre stage.





New Zealanders Mi-Sex weren't around when all the official accolades were being handed out.

While it was still being announced that the band had scooped the pool on the **Countdown** telecast of the 1980 TV Week Rock Music Awards, the guys were on the road in America starting a manoeuvre aimed at eventual domination of the international charts.

For the record, their successes at the Rock Awards were in the categories of Most Popular Australian Record (Single or Album) and Best Australian Single, both of which went to *Computer Games*. Mi-Sex also

won the Johnny O'Keefe Memorial Award as Best New Talent and their producer, Peter Dawkins, was named Best Australian Producer. The band was told of the awards during a trans-Pacific telephone conversation as part of **Countdown** the next week.

Computer Games and the album *Graffiti Crimes* had been the big aces up their sleeve. By the time they arrived back in Australia a new single *People* and album *Space Race* already were climbing the charts. And, while they were disappointed about not being at the Rock Awards telecast, Mi-Sex had achieved a surface-scratching

effect on the important international market.

Singer Steve Gilpin is usually the spokesman for the rest of the band — Kevin Stanton (guitar, vocals), Don Martin (bass, vocals), Murray Burns (keyboards, synthesiser, vocals) and Richard Hodgkinson (drums, rhythm guitar).

"We went to have a look and see what it was all about and the reaction we got was totally favorable," he said. "Some gigs were super-big and we sold 45,000 copies of *Computer Games* while we were in Canada. In the States the alternative radio stations — the campus stations — were really big on us and

they get to about three million people. Canadian commercial stations are a bit like Australian stations in that they draw their play lists from the rest of the world but, unfortunately, the commercial stations in America play only American music plus a few 'safe' British acts like Led Zeppelin. That's really disappointing."

Perhaps Americans eventually will recognise Mi-Sex en masse. It wouldn't be the first time an act which has had its initial success in Australia has made the US charts a considerable time later. The enormous US success of Air Supply's single, *Lost In Love*, is one classic example. But that's for the future... and the future is something in which the members of Mi-Sex are intensely interested. It is a fascination obvious in both their music and stage appearance... just look at their sci-fi inspired costumes and listen to the lyrics about computers, humanoids and test tube births.

"We always seem to write about those sorts of things," Gilpin said. "We are travelling all the time — twelve of us as a unit — and we change climates and situations very quickly. Compared to a lot of people, I suppose we are aliens, but we see what's happening around us and our creative energy comes from that. Certain things might not occur to us at the time, but we can reflect. When we arrived back from America I knew that, in effect, we already had our third album."

A lot of Australians will be hoping that Mi-Sex continues to travel, if just for the experiences which eventually wind up on their albums as hit songs.

Certainly they have gone a long way since leaving New Zealand only about two years ago.

CHRISTIE ALLEN

The year started out in a big way for Christie Allen ... and it's ending on just as high a note. Pretty, dark-haired Christie led something of a female take-over bid on the Australian charts late in 1979 and it carried over into the new decade. *He's My Number One*, the second single off her *Magic Rhythm* album, shot her into the **Countdown** Top 30 and, for a while, it refused to budge. In April, 1980, the following she had built through the song, and *Goose Bumps* before it, led to Christie being voted Australia's Most Popular Female Performer at the TV Week Rock Music Awards, a **Countdown** TV special.

The success of both songs also meant an award for their composer, Terry Britten. He was named Best Australian Songwriter. The awards were staged at a time when Christie was in the middle of her first national tour as a headline act.

'You might say it was a hectic start to the year,' she said. 'After the tour all I wanted to do was take a month off, so I went home to Western Australia and just stayed at my parents' place.'

Having taken that deep breath, Christie released the title track of her album as her next single, stayed around for a month to promote it, then flew to London to record her next album. At the same time, *Goose Bumps* was released as her first British Single. 'BA Robinson had already released it in England', she says. 'But he says himself that the song was meant for a female vocalist. His version wasn't very successful and mine sold about 75,000 copies in Australia, so that seemed like a good enough reason to go ahead. We're calling the *Magic Rhythm* album *Goose Bumps* for its release in the UK and America, as well. But none of the tracks I had hits with here were my

favorites off the album. I liked the ballad, *Count Me Out*, best of all.'

Terry Britten again played a major role in the release of Christie's second album, *Denise*. He had a hand in writing three tracks, played guitar on most and did some

of the arrangements with John Hudson. A couple of other interesting credits on the album are Pete Briquette, The Boomtown Rats' bass player, who co-wrote one track, and Steve Glen and Mike Burns, who have been responsible for big hits by

Hot Chocolate and Racey. 'With a little luck, a lot of hard work and some backing from the record company, we should be able to break the ice with *Goose Bumps*, then follow up with this latest album,' Christie said. The ice is melting rapidly.



Little River Band was not the first Australian group to make Number One on the US charts and, with the incredible success of AC/DC of late, LRB probably can't be classed as Australia's most successful rock export, either. But what is indisputable is the fact that they were the modern day pioneers as far as the Australian invasion of the US was concerned. They kicked down the doors and now have their own, multi-million dollar niche in the world's biggest record market. These days they regularly share bills with the likes of the Eagles during US tours. And LRB's reputation is certainly growing, rather than fading.

Europe remains elusive to LRB but, after a 1980 tour which took them through many European countries, manager Glenn Wheatley, the man who has guided their success in America, believes they have 'dented' that market, too. 'It will probably all depend on our next studio project now,' he said.

That means that Wheatley and LRB should have conquered Europe by mid-1981. The band's next album is due around February or March, following the recording of the title track of a movie titled *Honkytonk Speedway*, a session produced by the legendary George Martin, who once worked with a band called the Beatles. Then LRB will tour again — Australia and overseas — more than likely at the head of a bill featuring other international names such as Rocky Burnette.

Everything about LRB smacks of total professionalism, from the road crew to the people who, with Wheatley, take care of business. The players themselves are light on illusions, heavy on talent and experience. Their stability is proof of that. There have



been changes since the group first got together in 1975, but there has never been any doubt that LRB would survive and thrive. And, apart from their success as a group, the Most Popular Australian Band at the 1980 TV Week Rock Music Awards is comprised of five guys who can go their own ways just as successfully. Singer Glenn Shorrock puts his own pub bands together each Christmas, has appeared on *Paul Hogan Shows* as a comedy actor and is at home in the comper's chair on TV variety shows. Graham Goble turned producer during 1980 and the result was John Farnham's *Uncovered* album, which prompted Farnham to reflect on the 'genius' of the man with whom he had been working. Goble also has been involved in several studio projects with his fellow LRB guitarist Boeb Birtles who, in turn, has done some production work for Darryl Cotton. Lead guitarist David Briggs produced the phenomenally successful Australian Crawl debut album, *The Boys Light Up*, will be in charge of the follow-up and also will be involved in the recording future of Russell Morris. Drummer Derek Pellicci just



plays ... and plays. When not on stage with LRB, he's likely to turn up in Cotton's band, Farnham's band or Shorrock's Christmas band.

LRB is right up there with the Big Boys — a band of which Australia can be extremely proud.

JAMES FREUD & BERLIN

James Freud started out with the intention of touring the world with Gary Numan ... and wound up doing his own gigs in Australia's capital cities. But he emerged from it all smiling.

James recorded with Numan in England mid-year but, while the two remain personal friends, their musical relationship turned sour as James put down an album with Numan producing and playing guitar on some tracks. So for James it was back to Australia and no tour tour.

While he had been out of the country, his single,



Modern Girl, and album, *Breaking Silence*, had started invading the local charts. And not even all the confusion over the deal with Numan or a change of his band's name — from Radio Stars to Berlin — could stop both album and single becoming hits. Things had changed for the energetic young man who, 12 months previously, had been 'living on a dollar a day' and unable to put a stable band line-up together. His manager, Barrie Earl, was a solid influence, though, and his belief in James as a musician and songwriter did not waver throughout those hard times.

After taking James to England to look around the recording scene in 1979, they returned to Australia, put the current Berlin line-up together, then recorded



Breaking Silence. The Numan episode followed and, while it might have been unfortunate in some ways, it obviously was valuable in a number of others.

Re-recorded versions of about half the songs Numan produced for James will be included on his next album, due for release in the first half of 1981. To have released the tracks as they were recorded originally would have, to use

James' words, damaged his credibility. 'It was a decision that had to be made,' James said. 'The album as it was ended up sounding like Gary Numan and not James Freud and, in a musical sense, we had a clash over it.'

With all due respect to Gary Numan, Freud's audience in Australia has demonstrated that it likes the all-original version of James Freud himself.



Kim Hart will celebrate her twenty-first birthday in May, but just making twenty-one has been a hard slog for this pretty, dark-haired lady from Auckland, New Zealand.

Having three singles and an album released while you're still at school stamps you as 'different' from the rest of the class and Kim has experienced that dreadful feeling of being one out.

'While everyone else was busy worrying about what they were going to wear out on Saturday nights, I was busy worrying about what I'd wear on the next TV show I was doing,' she said. 'Kids can be cruel, so I had hate notes left in my locker and all that sort of thing. But it was actually at school that I decided I was going to be a professional singer and the opposition from the other

kids only made me more determined and, I think, a better person. I think it gave me a lot of backbone ... character building, as the saying goes.'

Whatever, Kim conquered her home market, then looked to Australia to widen her career horizons. She cut a single, *Love At First Night*, produced by Russell Dunlop, Jon English's producer and the man behind the Player

One Hit, *Space Invaders*. It was a little slow taking off, but by July Kim had crashed into the **Countdown** Top 10.

'We were getting teleaxes every day in New Zealand to tell us how the single was going and it was great to see it come into the charts, then gradually go up and up,' Kim said. 'Australia was always an iffy proposition for me — like making a cake really. You have to have the talent, because without that in the first place you can't sell records, but you also have to have a plan and some time to spend making it work.'

Kim spent some time in



Australia and made *Love At First Night* work, then she returned to promote the release of her second single to come out in this country, *You're The One*.

'But I want to spend even more time in Australia,' she said. 'I want to become really well established there, then go to Europe before I try myself out on the US market. Countries like Germany are meant to be really good for singers with a style like mine.'

Seems any country which likes good rock music, dynamic female voices and beautiful women will be good for Kim Hart, so that leaves her with plenty of room in which to move.

DARRYL COTTON



It's difficult to say whether there is any connection between the title of Darryl Cotton's album, *Best Seat In The House*, and his several appearances on **Countdown** during 1980.

On most of those happy occasions Darryl was in the hot seat as compere.

It was a task he handled with ease and his audience found the singles cut from *Best Seat In The House* easy to handle, too. *Same Old Girl* and *Here Comes Another Heartache* both were big hits, making Darryl's 'comeback' to the Australian scene an unqualified success.

The album had that 'hit' stamp all over it from the moment it was released. Playing or singing on the various tracks were names such as Warren 'The Pig' Morgan from John Paul Young's *All Stars*, Harvey James (Sherbs), David Briggs, Derek Pellicci, Beeb Birles and Graham Goble (Little River Band), George McArdle and Rick Formosa (ex-Little River Band) and Russell Hitchcock (Air

Supply). Chris Christian who, with Darryl, was a member of the moderately successful Cotton, Lloyd and Christian, was producer.

'Getting around to doing the album took a year and a bit, but the actual recording was done in two weeks,' Darryl said. 'I would have liked to have spent more time on it, but now I'm looking forward to the next one. I think I've proved to everyone now that I can pay my way. Going on the road with my band has obviously given me more thoughts, ideas and directions as far as my music is concerned.'

Darryl set up his band, The Charts, in June and immediately started a twelve-week national tour. One would have thought it would have been easy for someone who was a member of the old 'think pink' group, Zoot, to take to life on the road again, but that wasn't the case for Darryl.

'It had been eight years since I'd performed like that and the first couple of nights I was pretty nervous about



whether I could look and act the part. But the reaction was fantastic and I'm more than happy. I couldn't handle touring fifty-two weeks a year, though. There are a lot of other things I enjoy doing. I enjoyed the role I played in *The Young Doctors* on TV and I'd like to do some more acting. It's a matter of making the time available.'

Darryl Cotton has firmly established himself as one of the top solo singers in Australia with *Best Seat In The House* and now, with the success of the album, the management umbrella of Wheatley Brothers Entertainment and his own talent and enthusiasm, he is in the box seat to make the next year even bigger.

THE DUGITES



It took the Dugites just two months after the release of their self-titled, debut album in May, 1980, to become one of Australia's most popular new groups.

The band which was formed when four of its members were students in search of a few extra dollars

emerged from Perth with a neat package of pop songs — such as their first single, *Jeep Car* — and quickly started winning national acclaim. The Dugites are not interested in discussing suggestions that their music is contrived, but it is obvious that they started their trek

cast with a goal firmly in mind. Psychology graduate and guitarist Gunther Berghofer, music graduates Peter Crosbie (keyboards) and Paul Noonan (bass), former theatre arts student Lynda Nutter (vocals) and drummer Clarence Bailey did not start out as a group

of teenagers with some vague dream of instant stardom.

"Very few bands expect this sort of success first up and we certainly didn't but, then again, we didn't know why we shouldn't have this sort of success, either," Peter Crosbie, the Dugites' major songwriter, said. "We knew we had good songs, a good record and a good record company, but doing it right is not necessarily enough."

Brian Peacock, whose association with the rock industry goes back as far as Normie Rowe's Playboys, is a man to whom the Dugites credit much of their success.

"When we toured the eastern part of Australia the first time we had a few recording offers, but all that was out of our depth," Peter Crosbie said. "We didn't know how to handle it, but Brian was an old friend from Perth and we knew he had a lot of experience in the business. We approached him and asked him to negotiate a deal for us and from there it grew into a management thing. He sets up almost everything for us."

Peacock also co-produced the Dugites album with Bob Andrews, a member of Graham Parker's brilliant rock band, the Rumour.

"We met Bob when he was here on the last Parker tour in November (1979)," Gunther Berghofer explained. "We wanted to work with an overseas producer because we wanted the best possible result and we didn't think there was a producer in Australia who was suitable for our sort of music, so we approached him."

The result was a national reputation for a band not known outside Perth at the start of 1980. A follow-up is expected early in 1981 and, meanwhile, the Dugites are working on expanding their reputation from national to international.

Like Skyhooks without Shirley Strachan, Ol' 55 without Frankie J Holden didn't seem like a very exciting prospect. But, unlike Skyhooks, this Sydney-based band survived. That was a credit to them for starters, but even more impressive was the way they managed to keep producing very viable, commercial material through countless line-up and three recording company changes. The band had been in business for five years on July 4, 1980, the day before they made their first appearance on **Countdown** for nearly two years.

'We had six months off the road after a couple of the guys left the band about eighteen months ago, but we decided we wanted to keep it going,' guitarist Patrick Drummond said. 'But first we had to take a look at our whole direction and we decided that we wanted to make the look and sound of the band a lot more aggressive than it has been.'

That meant bringing two young players, guitarist 'Bad Bob' Tawny and bass player Terry 'Washing Machine' Bellow, into the band to join Drummond, singer-guitarist Rockpile Jones and drummer Geoff Plummer. 'They're both young and into heavy metal and they made the world of difference to the sound. Now we're calling it "heavy metal 50s" — that's the way we treated *Two Faces Have I* when we put it down as a single and that's the way we treated our album. The melodies are still nice and the vocals are still sweet, but the rest is a lot more punchy' Patrick Drummond said.

The whole deal means that one of Australia's most successful rock bands is, thankfully, still buoyant. They are still a band with a 'fun' image, too, a nice departure from some of the heavier acts which replaced them at the top of the charts



during the past two years. But Drummond insists that the image is not straight out of Happy Days like, for instance, American 'fifties freaks Sha Na Na. Nor is the music. 'I think the melody lines from those days are better than what's happening today, but when we apply

today's sound to them they seem to work better' Drummond said. 'It's working with audiences, anyway.' Ol' 55's career aims have taken on a distinctly 1980s feel, too.

A lot of Australian bands are making their presence felt on international markets and

Ol' 55 wants to get in for its own slice of that extremely lucrative action.

'It hasn't meant much to us in the past but if we can get our latest album sold overseas, we'll all be very happy. Every band has got to have a goal and, right now, that's ours.'

STREET ANGEL



Julie de Riva is quick to point out that it has nothing to do with being 'clean living types', but she has given up a twenty-a-day smoking habit and no-one in her band drinks.

'You have to be pretty fit just to come along to one of our gigs' Julie explained. 'We

do a ninety-minute show and run all the songs together. You've paid your four dollars or whatever, so you're going to get a show. I used to get a stretch halfway through our performance because I was smoking too many cigarettes, but not now. We want to be

renowned for putting on good performances and doing it consistently.'

That's all fairly typical of this energetic little blonde who left Adelaide about two years ago and went to Melbourne for the express purpose of joining a band or forming her own. The result

was Street Angel, a band which made its first appearance on **Countdown** in July, 1980.

'I went through numerous auditions, but I couldn't find the type of band I wanted to be in, so I started auditioning people myself,' Julie said. 'I'd auditioned twenty-six different musicians by the time I met Bruce Stephens. He had come across from New Zealand with Rob Gray and they were looking for a band, too.'

Bass player Stephens and drummer Gray teamed up with Julie and two other New Zealanders, guitarists Jim Taylor and Peter Grimwood, to form Street Angel and the band started doing support gigs to Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons. A recording company executive saw them in action one night at Melbourne's Bombay Rock and the band was on its way to the studios. Street Angel's first single *Caught In The Act* will be followed by an all-original album early in 1981.

Julie will not argue with anyone who wants to categorise Street Angel, but she refuses to attempt that task herself.

'We like to delve into a lot of areas of music,' she said. 'We like to do that because we are a young band. It's good to keep everything open because we've got a long way to go together.'

She is more positive about the band having a good time — and passing this feeling on to audiences.

'As our reputation becomes a bit bigger, the kids will know that when we come into town we're all going to have a good time. It's going to be full on. That's what we're ultimately aiming for' she maintains.

Should that attitude prevail, it's an aim which Street Angel should be able to reach without much hassle at all.

REELS

Late in 1979 it looked like a band with the most unlikely origins would be one of Australia's biggest hopes for the 'eighties.

The Reels had bounced out of the New South Wales town of Dubbo, hardly famous for its rock groups, with an album they had put down in a mobile studio. A couple of hit singles were cut from it and the band was on its way. But, by February, 1980, all the excitement surrounding the Reels had died down and virtually nothing was heard of them until July when they dropped up again on **Countdown**.

'Well, we broke off with our management and we wanted to re-assess everything we were doing because we weren't very happy' singer David Mason explained. 'Then we started rehearsing again in Dubbo and got our Reels By Rail tour going.'

The tour took the band through Eastern Australia by train and was the build-up to recording a follow-up album to their self-titled debut, which, by the way, was released in more than twenty countries. And the band got itself back on the track — literally — under its own management.

'We just used different agencies for the tour and we want to employ someone to handle negotiations with our record company for us' Mason said. 'We can handle the image part of it pretty well, but we need someone to organise things like contracts... a money person, that's what we need. None of us is into money too much. But it's hard to get someone who will just manage those things for you and not try to take control of you. We want to be totally in control of the creative side, things like the albums covers as well as the music. We don't have our

record company telling us what to do because we're commercial anyway, so we don't need a manager running that side of things.'

The Reels are Mason, Colin Newham and Karen Ansell (keyboards), Craig Hooper (guitar), Paul

Abrahams (bass) and John Ellis (drums). And proof of Mason's statement about their ability to be commercial is in almost every song they play.

Often dismissed as simple, sometimes labelled punk by those who obviously don't

know, the Reels' music, in fact, is as close as most bands ever get to producing a radio programmer's dream come true. And all that hope for the 1980s is alive and kicking.



TOMMY SHAW (STYX)



It is rare indeed for an overseas artist to actually request to perform live on **Countdown**, but that's exactly what happened with Tommy Shaw, the little singer-guitarist from the American band Styx.

Tommy extended a

promotional visit to Japan and Australia by a couple of days to appear on **Countdown**... and stunned everyone with a solo version of *Beat On The River*, one of the tracks he wrote for *Cementare*, the album which yielded the hit single *Babe*.

And, instead of using recorded instrumental backing, Tommy simply borrowed a mandolin and provided the music himself.

It was a gesture that was typical of Styx.

"We're one of those bands you have to see live to appreciate," Tommy explained. "Live performances are our strongest point. The songs and the records are good, but seeing it all happen on stage is what it's all about."

Alabama-born Tommy Shaw provides one of a wide range of influences which make up the distinctive sound of Styx.

"Everybody has been playing their instruments for at least fifteen years, but our backgrounds are very different," he said. "Chuck and John Panozzo were brought up in Chicago and so was Dennis de Young. They've been together since 1963. They were just a little neighborhood band then... I don't even know whether they had a name."

JY (guitarist James Young) was more into the Jimi Hendrix thing back in those days.

"Me...? Well, every now and then I still like to get back to Alabama and play some flat-top guitar with some old country people."

Styx has been a highly successful band on the charts and, more particularly, the touring circuit in America since the mid-1970s and the purpose of Tommy Shaw's trip to this part of the world was to check out what would be the prospects of the band touring Australia and Asia during 1981.

Anyone who saw the dynamic little guy with the mane of blond hair and a mandolin on an April, 1980, edition of **Countdown** will be hoping those prospects get better and better.

THE SHERBS



The Sherbs are out to achieve something no other Australian band has managed — to crawl back to the top after a sustained period out in the wilderness.

Only this time it will be without all the glitz that was so much a part of Sherbet, one of Australia's most successful groups of the 1970s and a band which had a British Top Ten hit with *Hweat*. You won't be seeing much of Daryl Braithwaite, one of the most photographed rock stars in this country, in the fan magazines any more and, in fact, you'll be subject to a lot less of the kind of hype which surrounded Sherbet. Yet the band, with its newly adopted name, still has the same ambition — to get back

to the top of the Australian charts, then have another crack at the international market. They intend doing it without their long time manager Roger Davies, now working for Olivia Newton-John's management, and on the basis of their musical ability.

"Our music style has changed. It's harder now and there's a more positive direction in the band," Daryl Braithwaite said. "I think we're actually more a band now. We're basically managing ourselves and that way we know exactly what we're in for, what we want to do and what we have to do. We don't want to go back to the situation Sherbet was in when we had to do this or do that because we

were told so. I look back on some things and just wonder why I ever did them. What specifically I can't say, but we want to become more inaccessible to people now. We were in every magazine as Sherbet and we were known more, I think, as identities physically rather than musically. What we are trying to do now is become known more for our prowess in playing... as musicians."

The Sherbs line-up has survived through a fairly bleak time in 1979-1980. Daryl (vocals), Harvey James (guitar), Garth Porter (keyboards), Tony Mitchell (bass) and Alan Sandow (drums) have not had a taste of the success they enjoyed in the mid-1970s for some time. But according to Daryl that

won't be the case for long. "It hasn't been difficult for us to keep the band together, but we have been a bit frustrated" he said. "It gets that way when you hear from your record company that radio stations won't pick up your songs. You can feel that there's a contempt for the band for some reason and it's coming mainly from radio stations because, when we do live gigs, we get good reaction. We're not pulling crowds like we used to, but the crowds we are getting go away happy. So, it's a matter of doing it all over again and that's why it's so good for us — it's a big challenge. I think we're in more high spirits now than we've ever been and we're adamant that we'll succeed again."

THE NUMBERS



The Numbers can consider themselves different from most bands on the Australian scene for several reasons.

Firstly, they are one of the few three-piece groups to have made their presence felt during 1980... and then their line-up contains a brother-sister combination.

The B-52s' Ricky and Cindy Wilson were the only other brother and sister duo in bands on **Countdown** during the year.

The Numbers are Chris and Annalisse Morrow, who play guitar and bass respectively, and drummer Simon Vidale. After making

their mark on the Sydney pub scene, the band toured Australia with XTC in mid-1979 and, by the start of 1980, had started to emerge as a recording band very much in their own right.

'Working rock'n'roll is a matter of jumping from stage to stage' Chris Morrow,

who writes most of The Numbers' material, said. 'Eventually you hope to get to a stage where you go through the transition from being a pub band to a recording band. It's a matter of hard work and plugging away. We spent about six months just knocking on doors. Now we're with a small recording label, but that gives us a lot more creative flexibility, I think.'

The Numbers performed two singles, *Modern Song* and *Five-Letter Word*, on **Countdown** during the year and followed them up with the release of their self-titled, debut album. Like most young Australian bands who have made inroads on the recording scene here, they are now looking towards overseas markets. Unlike many, though, they do not want to be known as the top-drawing band in Australia before they leave the country.

'We'd like to go to Europe to maybe play some gigs, have a look around and see what the attitude is there' Chris said. 'I think it will take us a while just to find out which end is up, but we want to try to develop overseas at the same time as we are developing here.'

'We don't want to get to the end of the diving board in Australia and then just jump. I think everyone realises that America is the biggest place in terms of making money, but we've set our sights on Europe because we think we'd be more comfortable there. We think we are the type of band that would fit into the British scene more easily. After all, that's where we drew most of our inspiration from in the first place. We were all listening to bands like the Stones, the Who, the Small Faces and the Kinks when our musical behavioural patterns were starting to form.'

JOHN St PEETERS

A true veteran of the music industry at the age of twenty-three, John St Peeters has been through every change in modern rock'n'roll and managed to stay abreast — sometimes ahead — of most of them.

The age of twenty-three? Well, most people don't believe him, and that's understandable. After all, he has been part of Australia's music scene for fifteen years.

'I started when I was seven and I made my first appearance when I was eight,' he said after compering an edition of **Countdown**. 'Now I usually have to produce my driver's licence to prove my age to people. I'm like all those kids who started on Young Talent Time. Everyone thinks they must be thirty or thirty-five because they've been around so long, but most of them are only early twenties.'

A singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, John St Peeters has maintained the enthusiasm to keep stretching his talent. And he has achieved results in overseas countries such as South Africa which would be the envy of many of his peers. His **Countdown** appearance in July, in fact, was squeezed in between two tours of South Africa.

'We were over there for four weeks and they wanted us to stay on, but the last album *One Night Stand* was due out in Australia so we had to reshuffle everything to be home when it was released,' he said. 'I actually did the single *Love Is All We Need* as far back as last September when I was touring in Australia with Tina Turner. Her backing band worked on it with me.'

John also had a bit with the theme from another television show — the Ten Network's Simon Townsend's *Wonder World*.

'I was asked to write a

theme, but I couldn't because we were too busy putting *One Night Stand* together' he said. 'A good friend of mine, Chris Polcer, wrote it and I just went into the studio and put it down. I was a bit worried about it first because I thought it would give me too young an image, but it's

turned out to be great.'

John also was worried about *Love Is All We Need* being too late to catch the disco boom. 'A few months ago it was the biggest thing in the world, but the music scene changes every six months. The song had a disco flavour, so I wasn't

really sure about it. I suppose you have got to keep up with the times to be a successful songwriter ... but I can't see myself doing *New Wave*.'





One problem about Wreckless Eric is that, just occasionally, he lives up to his name.

'I think I might have to bring one of my own microphones in' he said after rehearsing his single *Pep Song* on **Countdown**. 'They're a little bit worried about me. I mean, I've got this trick, you see, where I throw the mike up in the air and catch it ... but sometimes I don't catch it. It's about forty quids' worth of public property and they don't want it smashed before the public's very eye, do they? They've got about a million quids' worth of

lighting up on the ceiling, too, so I supposed they should be worried.'

The good-natured little Cockney finally decided to leave his microphone trick out of his **Countdown** appearance and, like most other things, he found it all came for a laugh.

'I've done a lot of European TV shows and they're hilarious' he said. 'That problem with the microphone is nothing. I've been asked to mime into the end of a piece of metal tubing with one of those foam tops on it, with a bit of wire celloped on the end of it to

make it look like it had a lead. I'm enjoying myself here ... enjoying myself almost to death, really.'

The mid-year tour by Wreckless Eric (real name Eric Golden) and his band proved to be one of the little surprise packets of the year. Eric didn't know what to expect and neither did most Australians, but he drew good crowds to small venues throughout the country. 'I'd heard we had a bit of a following out here, but you don't learn anything about foreign countries at school in England except where they are and what their main

products are. I thought the main products of Australia were Rolf Harris and a lot of sheep. I truthfully did think that we'd have to drive for six days between gigs and carry tanks of water and, when we'd get where we were going, there'd be this large tin shed right in the middle of nowhere.'



According to Eric, his grandfather emigrated to Australia to start a new life just after World War I. He started living in the Northern Territory, but went back to England without packing shortly after a snake tried to share his sleeping bag one memorable night.

'He spent the rest of his days in Oldham, Lancashire, selling insurance' Eric said. 'And there's even worse than that in my family line — I have a sister who's a chartered accountant!'

It was the other side of the family which influenced young Eric. 'My other grandfather was a classical violinist, but there was no money in that so he started playing sax with a dance band. My grandmother taught piano, but she wouldn't teach me. She didn't want me to go into music because she thought it had led my grandfather off the straight and narrow. I don't think I was ever on the straight and narrow in the first place, so she needn't have worried.'

THE RAMONES

Johnny and Joey Ramone hardly created a sensation as compadres of **Countdown** but, then again, their 'family' band is one which would rather let the music, not the image, do the talking.

'We're just an American band playing genuine rock'n'roll that comes from the gut ... not like all that pre-fabricated stuff that's around today,' Johnny explained on **Countdown**.

It's a simple philosophy which worked beautifully when Johnny, Joey, Dee Dee and Marky Ramone toured Australia for the first time in July. And to top it off, the Ramones beaght with them a song which followed up Pink Floyd's *Another Brick In the Wall* — their *Rock'n'Roll High School* picked up on every schoolkid's secret ridicule of 'the system' where Pink Floyd left off earlier in the year. They had none of the sophistication of Floyd, a fact which probably allowed them to deliver their message in even stronger terms than Pink Floyd did.

The Ramones emerged from the Forest Hills area of New York in 1974, leather-jacketed and be-joined the same way they are today. Yet they did not stand still musically during the production of four albums and, by the time they were contemplating a fifth, they had legendary producer Phil Spector wanting to work with them.

'He approached us three years ago in Los Angeles,' Joey Ramone said. 'He told us he wanted to make a comeback and he was looking for somebody original and doing something different. He told us he was a big fan of ours and wanted to do an album with us.'

The result was the *End Of The Century* set, which contained a re-worked version of *Rock'n'Roll High School*, the first song to chart in Australia for the Ramones.

The song had been written eighteen months earlier for the movie of the same name, which starred the group.

Despite a sound and image which had a lot of parents — and probably more than a few teachers — ducking for cover, the Ramones shrink away from being labelled a punk band or even tough.

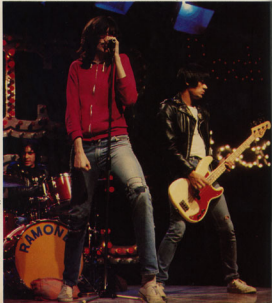
'I think we just want to have an image that is basically just ourselves' guitarist Johnny said. 'We wear the sort of things we grew up wearing. I don't know ... I don't think we look tough. We're just regular people. We like touring a lot and playing for people who really want to see us. That's a good feeling.'

Their touring and *Rock'n'Roll High School*



finally broke the Ramones in this country so, should they wish to continue spending a lot of time on the road, it's

safe to say that Australia will be seeing them in action — live and on film clips — yet again in 1981.





Leo Sayer is proof that talent will always survive. After a very quiet 12 to 18 months, playing to middle-of-the-road audiences in Britain, he burst back into the rock charts late in 1980 with his single *More Than I Can Say* and album *Living In A Fantasy*. The single, in fact, shot to Number One on the **Countdown** chart just weeks after release, a good indication that a tour of

Australia scheduled for early 1981 will be a monster.

It won't be the first time Leo has packed Australian venues, either. His first tour of Australia in 1975, hot on the heels of a couple of chart successes, was expected to be mildly successful but, eventually, the box office went wild. He sold out five shows at Melbourne's Festival Hall, unprecedented at that time. Next time around, he looks certain to repeat that performance in any Australian capital city he chooses to play.

Apart from being a class performer over the years, Leo Sayer has, as anyone in the rock world will tell you, been one of the genuine nice guys. He also has been a great friend to **Countdown**. Lep compered the London end of **Countdown's** 100th show — way, way back on April 3, 1977 — and, at the time, was given a **Countdown** T-shirt. About 18 months later he agreed to do an interview with Ian Meldrum on a freezing London morning . . . and turned up at the studio wearing the same T-shirt, slightly worse for wear, but still intact.

Seven years as part of the international rock scene have not had any worsening effects on Leo Sayer, himself, though. He still retains the boyish good looks which helped keep the fans at his record-breaking Australian concerts screaming for more. And the voice which ranges from fireside soft to a razor-sharp cutting edge still remains. More importantly, that 'nice guy' tag still fits as well as ever.

With Australian Alan Tarney now at the Sayer production helm — and co-writing songs with him for the likes of Cliff Richard — the energetic little Englishman is back in the biggest way possible. You can't go higher than Number One.

IAN 'MOLLY' MELDRUM

Why does this man have egg on his face . . . ?
Why is that lobster hanging from the tip of his nose . . .
and where on earth did he get that B-52 hairstyle? And — oh, heaven forbid! — has he really joined the raincoat brigade???

Ian 'Molly' Meldrum gets himself into some amazing situations during a year's editions of **Countdown**. Fortunately, he has been involved in the show since it first went to air more than five years — or about 280 episodes — ago, so he knows how to get out of most of them by now.

Molly's name, more than any other, has become synonymous with **Countdown**. Some members of the production crew, notably the current executive producer, Rob Weekes, were also there at the start and most of the biggest acts in the world have appeared on the show, but Molly is the guy everyone sees every weekend. In fact, along with the Don Lanes, Mike Walshes and Bert Newtons of this world, he can be classed as one of the most popular personalities who appears regularly on television in this country today. Certainly his audience each week is as big, if not bigger, than the masses attracted by the variety stars. And his opinions on the products of the multi-million dollar recording industry carry more weight — Australia-wide — than anyone else's.

With that goes an enormous responsibility, one which Molly accepts with a degree of seriousness and intensity belied by the pictures on this page. If it means a hectic trip half way around the world — for just one day — to bring the **Countdown** audience what it wants, Molly will pack his bags. If it means staying up all night to make dozens of





phone calls, become involved in heavy negotiations or have a few arguments to confirm an interview, Molly won't stop talking until he has either won or exhausted all the possibilities twice over. Should he have to play the fall guy to give something that added extra in entertainment value, there will be no argument at all. In fact, he will probably make the suggestion in the first place.

Molly is not the be-all and end-all of **Countdown**, but he is an enormously powerful influence and a catalyst. A **Countdown** book would be incomplete without these pages.

He did not know it was being written, by the way. Had that been the case, he would have ordered major changes . . . or demanded that it be scrubbed altogether.

You can't help bad luck, Molly. There's a lot of it going around.





