

ECCENTRIC

25p

SLEEVE NOTES

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ORANGE JUICE



BLACK UNDERTONES

belle stars ALARM

MONOCHROME SET

**THOMPSON
TWINS**

**SPEAR OF DESTINY
SEX GANG CHILDREN**

farmers boys

ORANGE JUICE



On this occasion Edwyn got the first insult in. I was minding my own business at the Orange Juice soundcheck. A cheery 'Hello mopehead' drew my attention to a giraffe tuning a guitar on stage. I pointed out our darling Edwyn's resemblance to a giraffe, to which he replied, "Yes, I do have an exceedingly long neck." He forgot to mention the tufts on top, chewing lower lip and boney knees. It struck me how down to earth Edwyn is, but also how easy it would be to take what he says, on stage and in interviews, out of context.

Edwyn invites me into O.J.'s dressing room and hands me an apple, which I shove up my nose.

ESN: Have you been taking singing lessons?

EDWYN: Yeah, I only went for three. Tony Labrette was teaching me. She was featured in Riverside a while ago. Also

in the 'Rock 'n' Roll Swindle', she was Rotten's tutor. There was a time when the press were being derogatory about my voice. I was quite self conscious for a while. But now I think, big deal. It took an awful lot of luck, effort and time to record the last album. We have to pay for our own recording costs because we have a tape lease deal. It appears that O.J. have a lot more control than other bands in their advertising and packaging. The drawback of this is we have to pay the recording costs ourselves. It was very disheartening when the L.P.'s release was met with a thumbs down. After about a month I got over it. The reception we received on the last tour was very encouraging. O.J. have their loyal brass roots, which is good. I did not know how impressionable the O.J. fans were. Obviously they were not really bothered by the press.

ESN: Is it true that you had difficulty performing some of the "Rip It Up" LP songs live?

EDWYN: 'Tenterhook' was a problem. We did it once or twice. It was a big epic ballad on the album. Technically we had problems with it on stage. It is one ironically I feel, that was one of the easiest to sing on the album; one of the ones I felt most for and I think is probably the most successful vocal on the album. Doing any kind of ballad in a live context is hard. It is quite a sensitive song. That sounds pretty precious, which it is. It does not come over so well live, despite the big heavy metal guitar solos.

ESN: I liked the feel of 'Rip It Up' on the live sounding 12" single. Are you thinking of recording more material in a similar vein?

EDWYN: That was more or less a live approach, bar the vocals. We set up the amps and recorded everything live in the studio. We took a similar approach with 'Sad Lament', 'Love Sick' and the 'Felicity' flexi disc. We are going to record the next album, the same way. It was a direct result of playing live. At the end of the last tour there was a real empathy within the group. We practically produced the 12" ourselves. It is an accurate impression of us playing live.



Orange Juice have been seen frequently on television since 'Rip It Up'. Do not be too surprised if they never appear on Top of the Pops again.

EDWYN: "Crazy Dave MacIlmont has been going over the top, a little bit." After the band's second appearance on the programme, Dave lodged his objection on/with one of the programme's producers.

EDWYN: "The chart success was just the icing on the cake. The album will have some of that spark. Things are going well for the group. Our record company is beginning to see us as an ongoing proposition. That is because of the 'Rip It Up' album, which was to some extent a conscious move to do something palatable and quite commercial.

ESN: But you still like the music?

EDWYN: I like a lot of the songs on the 'Rip It Up' album, but like you said the 12" captures a lot more excitement. I like the kind of edge that Stax and Motown has. We don't mean to do an anti-production, but so many now are very clinical. There is no natural ambience. It is all synthetic. We are going to work with Foetus, who is in a group called, 'You've Got Foetus On Your Breath'. He is going to be a sort of 'Eno' figure to O.J.'s rocky music. I am

not Brian of course. Foetus is going to treat things and get really natural sounds. We might be using tiny 5 watt amplifiers, that are as loud as your T.V., and put them in dustbins. That is to get a very live sound. It is still going to be fairly conventional music. O.J. play fairly orthodox songs, with a fairly unusual singer. We are going to use different, but not synthetic ways to treat guitar sounds. We want something that sounds natural. What could be more natural than putting amplifiers in a dustbin? It is quite ironic, but the band has always gone it's own way. We feel we have already made our most commercially accessible album in 'Rip It Up'. The new direction is not so radio playable, like the 12", and we are continuing that. Maybe they will play other songs now that we have established ourselves. I think the normal tendency for a group would be to do something blander still. I think it is already too late for O.J., because we have already gone horrible. We have already gone nasty pop. Stuff like "Sad Lament", is a more sophisticated version of what we were doing on Postcard.

Reg, the tour manager, distracts our attention with news from the leader of the nation's youth. "Peel was doing a roadshow with Big Country. He said they were really nice guys, unlike the bassist from Orange Juice who is a fuckin' twat." (Meaningful words from a man off air). Everybody, especially Dave, has an astonished giggle.

Our amiable giraffe then picks up on his subject.

EDWYN: In the future I would like to have a unique lighting show, if we get to the next stage. I've already been designing a backdrop. It is basically a double life size screen print of all four members of the group holding guitars.

ESN: Sounds horrible.

EDWYN: Then the group will be playing in front of an image of themselves. There will be all of us in a line. It will be really dramatic, and lit aggressively. We have to get to the next stage first to get some money and technicians.

When I talked to Eddy the band had not played live since the hit single.

EDWYN: "It will be interesting to see how we will crossover into a mainstream pop audience. Despite our pretensions of being a pop group we have not had a Duran Duran type audience.

That comment could possibly go down in history under 'famous last words'.

Elwyn did not believe me when I told him there would be a conglomeration of hysterical females. "Rubbish, we do not hold that kind of appeal." At the end of the night I smugly said 'I told you so.'

"It's your fault, I'm blaming it on you, for saying it." "From now on Eddy, all of your audiences will be like that."

Silence.

SIMON MCKAY



HIGH FIVE

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SPEAR OF DESTINY

I expected Spear of Destiny to totally disregard Theatre of Hate songs, after the band's shuffle. I was surprised to hear 'Poppies' on a Spear of Destiny Peel session; the band had recently formed then, which would seem a logical reason. I was certainly surprised to see them six months later, play 'Love is A Ghost' as an encore.

STAN: That's the only one we still do. We've done 'Poppies', 'The Hop' and another one. They were the more relevant songs. Spiritually, they were in the direction of Spear of Destiny.

ESN: I thought you would be looking for a complete progression, leaving all of T.O.H. material behind.

STAN: There's no regrets about T.O.H. We did what we meant to, when we set out. The train pulled in at the station and we got off. The three of us turned round at a rehearsal and we had decided it had gone far enough. We are proud of what we achieved. It's nice to see people at the gigs with Theatre of Hate on their backs, and badges.

Musically there was no one like Theatre of Hate two and a half years ago. Since then their influence has spread.

STAN: We had an unacceptable sound. It was always hard work. We're working hard now. That's how we feel it should be. That is why we tour so much. At the end of the British tour, promoting the LP, we had three days off. We then went to Europe for six weeks.

ESN: You're in a strange position. People come to see you because they've liked T.O.H. for the last couple of years. It is not necessarily Spear of Destiny they are coming to see. It leaves you with something to prove.

STAN: Yeah, we have to prove that what we are doing now is better. We're forgetting the past and moving on. Hopefully it will

enable the kids to move on themselves. People are starting to write 'Spear of Destiny' on the back of their jackets now. It's progression, something the government hate. The government like you to be doing the same thing, they know exactly what's happening and can control it. Spear of Destiny may seem trivial in that sense, it is definitely a move in the right direction though.

ESN: I think people are accepting Spear of Destiny, people enjoy themselves when they come to see you. They buy the records.

STAN: I'm really happy about Spear of Destiny in general. It's working, really getting across. It is going on a lot more smoothly than we expected. That is giving us confidence. Bands tend to think that the punters are idiots. They expect people to come and see them, then buy the records, then come again next time. We don't think like that. We are working hard. People realise this, that is how being close to your audience is achieved. It does not matter how many people come to see us. They all deserve the show, no effort should be spared on our part. We don't believe in the 'take the money and run' attitude.

THE ALARM

The Alarm are presently touring, with U2 in America. When they return, they intend recording their debut album. The band; Mike Peters, Dave Sharp, Eddie MacDonald and Nigel Twiss, are signed to Illegal Records, who have the power to put a single through A+M Records, via IRS.

MIKE: It sounds complicated, but it's good. It means we have control over things. We're working with young people who are really into what's happening. Even the people from A+M travel to come and see us. They're keen, they want to work with young bands. They're tired with all the old dinosaurs they've got. They want to put something into young groups, which is good. I met one guy from A+M who hadn't heard of Southern Death Cult, so I took him down to see them. He was amazed at how good they were. It made the whole company aware of that band, who had only done a few gigs then.



in shops. When you saw bands and thought, wow! There's more to music than records, it's the people in the group. It's the fact that they mean something to you. When we looked at the band, we thought; when hang on, let's go back to basics. What was the first thing we ever did? After seeing The Clash, 'wrote 'Alarm, Alarm' (It was about waking up to something that was going on. We don't do it now, it was a long time ago. It is not really a song for The Alarm to play live). We went off from there, and moved onto something completely new. We set ourselves up so we could make demos, tapes; to further our careers and for us to listen to. We decided to go straight in and do a single. So, we got Summer jobs and saved up every penny we could. We then moved to London, and got noticed straight away. We built up slowly from there. We didn't want to have the hype treatment on us. When the record companies first came and saw us, they thought, Ah! acoustic guitars, good looking lads, good songs. They offered us big deals, and we said no. We wanted to develop as a group, build up and write more songs, and write better songs which we are getting together now. We're now in a strong position. People respect us for what we are, and not what they're told we are.

MIKE: I'm from North Wales, a couple of others from the band lived in Manchester. We decided to move, and live in London. It was just dead ends where we lived. We would not have got anywhere, had we not moved away. I grew up with Elkie, since we were fifteen. We have all been in different bands. The Alarm came into existence about eighteen months ago. The bands we had been in, got absolutely nowhere. We had done all the same old handwaggon tricks, you know; look like so and so, sound like so and so. One day we saw U2 at the Marquee. We went and wrote some new songs after that. The spirit of U2 rubbed off on us. We took a long hard look at ourselves, and wondered what we had got ourselves into. What we were doing was rubbish. We split the band up then. We gradually got back together, as The Alarm. The name came from the first song I ever wrote. It was written when I got into music, via The Clash and things like that, real music not just music you bought

THE BELLE STARS



I was disappointed and annoyed that the first Belle Stars LP was made up of only fifty percent their songs, and the other fifty was covers.

SJ: For a first album I don't think that's at all a bad thing. It seemed apt and fitting when we did it. It was a bit of a fashionable thing to do at the time. We wanted to do an album, but we didn't think we had enough good material of our own.

JUDY: We were told we were a good band but couldn't write songs. We accepted that at the time, and we had to put out records. We're just using our material now though, regardless. People seem to like it.

SJ: Doing covers gave us a bad name with the press. You can't have it both ways. People used to only be acclaimed for doing covers. The Beatles did all covers when they started, that's regressing a bit. It is how most bands start though.

At the end of last year The Belle Stars did not look as though they were on the verge of success. 'Sign of the Times' is their strongest song yet. As well as it's success in England, it has also sold well in; America, Belgium, France, Holland, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

JUDY: We were surprised about the success too. It must be a strong song to be doing well in so many countries though.

SJ: We've been made to sound commercial, which is good because we are obviously aiming for the top ten area. We would like to move towards a band sound and remain popular. We're looking for the right producer. It has to be someone we can put our confidence in. There are seven of us, and he would have to suit us all. We need someone to bring out the best in each of us, someone who inspires confidence. It's different to playing on stage, where it doesn't matter if a bum note slips out. You have to go over and over it. You're in a little booth, with a pair of headphones on. You feel like an artist in front of a blank piece of paper. You don't know what to do. If you were confident you suddenly clam up and don't know how to play anymore. Claire and I may have to improvise on small pieces. You have to come up with something straight away. There isn't much time to do it either, because we're on a low budget. A lot of the producers treat you like session musicians, and expect you to be able to play anything. That is respectful, they are assuming we can play well, but on the other hand it can put you on the spot. Sometimes they are a bit condescending.

ESN: How would you compare your sound on stage, to what is released on record?

JUDY: It's a big dilemma when we do big productions, like 'Sign of the Times'. There were so many backing vocals. When we do it live there are only two people left to sing. It's really hard to transpose the sound, and reproduce it live. It's livelier live! In the studio we're so isolated. A producer can destroy your confidence, and you don't do something exciting. There's something dead about the album, it's quite nice, but it could have been better. Producers always want you to stick to whatever is considered the modern sound. They don't want Sarah-Jane to ram her tremelo arm, or to do anything obnoxious. "No that doesn't quite fit the song," they'll say. The problem is getting any excitement down on a record. I don't think it's right recording a live album. It's difficult to record in a twenty-four track studio, when we go in one at a time. You have to learn how to go in on your own and play with the same sort of zest. As a drummer I could spend six hours whacking the drums, while technicians fiddle the mikes around, tuning them. By the time you have to play, you can't be bothered. Jenny sings better live. If she has people in front of her she really lets rip. 'Sweet Memory' is the best yet. That was supposed to be a B side. We just chucked it out, like we would live. It's the first thing we've recorded that didn't have a heavy production on it. We just bunged it down in a couple of hours. 'April Fool' would have been the A side. Everything on it was isolated and analysed and in the end it's a dull recording. It's a good song but on record, it is mechanical and has lost the liveliness.

The sudden success has meant mass-media demand for the Belle Stars. This inhibits on how much time there is left to play their instruments.

JUDY: We've been playing, professionally, for a living for the last three years. In that time I've probably only played drums as much as somebody at school whacking their mate's kit, would. We don't have time to practise our instruments, we're too busy doing interviews like this.

(A passing Stella shouts, "hint, hint!" and giggles off).

All I do is, interviews, photo sessions and travel. The last six months has been especially hectic. I had to make a big effort before the last British tour to spend

ten days drumming. I had to refuse completely to be interviewed. I have become a professional interviewee. If I'm playing places like Manchester Apollo, I have to practise. I do enjoy the music, I could get resentful about everything though. It's obvious why people do press conferences. I'd rather be a brilliant drummer than a famous one.

Sarah-Jane had naffed off for a quick ciggie behind the bike sheds or something. She probably would not have come back if she realised the tape was still going. Judy explains to her that she has probably played guitar less in three years, than a person on the dole would in a month.

SJ: Oh my God, you're right. I don't have time to even go to the launderette and get on with living. It's the same for all bands. I've always wondered why bands don't improve, but instead get worse. It opens your eyes. You suddenly see why.

The Belle Stars are currently in Europe, then off to America, back to England and record the next LP. "Then it gets boring," Judy speculates, "British Tour, Europe, America, next LP"

SIMON MCKAY



the monochrome set

"People wrote in after 'Eligible Bachelors' saying, 'That is a wonderful first album, are you going to do anything else?' Others wrote in, praising our track on Pillows And Prayers; Eine Symphonie. They do not realise we have done a lot since that. I would like to give people a taste of what we did," Bid.

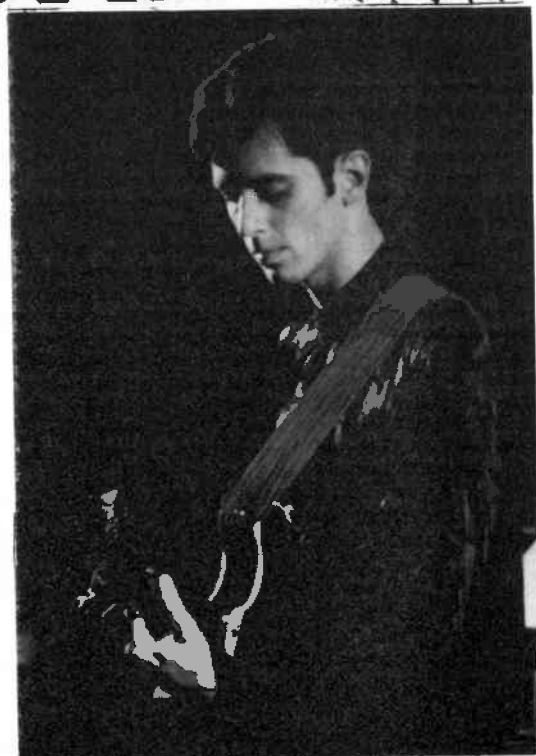
The first single, HE'S FRANK/ALPHAVILLE, was released at the beginning of '79. "He's Frank" was written seven years ago. We still do it live, for the sake of it is a good last number. 'Alphaville'; I can't stand singing the lyrics. It is a good song, I just can't bring myself to sing the lyrics. They are the worst I have ever written.

'EINE SYMPHONIE DES GRAUENS', "It could have been done on any of the albums, or at any time during the last few years. Maybe, it would be a hit single if we re-did it." The B side was an instrumental, 'Lester Leaps In.'

'THE MONOCHROME SET/MR. BIZARRO, "The Monochrome Set, was out in two different mixes. The first was mixed partially in Lester Square's absence, he went out for a cigarette. He didn't hear it until the first pressing was out. He said the guitar was too quiet. A couple of thousand got re-released. The first repressing had a John Bull printing set stamp saying 'remix' on them," Andy. "We do Mr. Bizzaro really well on stage now. It's a completely different song," Bid.

'HE'S FRANK (Slight Return) was the last release on Rough Trade. It was on a Disque Bleu label. The version of 'He's Frank' was an early demo, as were 'Silicon Carne' and 'Fallout'. Rough Trade had recently been done for selling bootlegs. This EP was not a bootleg, but it was made to look like one. They hoped the BFI would try and do them for it, and make themselves look stupid. Then Rough Trade would sue them, nothing happened though. Rough Trade get a perverse pleasure out of releasing demos. It saves them on studio time as well."

'THE STRANGE BOUTIQUE/SURFING S.W.12: The first single for Dindisc after the Monochrome Set left Rough Trade. "The



Strange Boutique sounded good when we did it. It relies on the keyboards which all went through a Devo. It's not worth half doing it live now."

405 LINES/GOODBYE JOE: "405 LINES was a shitty single and a shitty thing to put out, an instrumental single in the first place was a mistake. It was badly done. 'Goodbye Joe' was off the first LP. It had a bit from a Bristol Skinhead gig, me saying, "Let's have some decorum."

APOCALYPSO/FIASCO BONCO. "It was awful, but I don't think it deserved the bad reviews. Bad song, bad lyrics, about to rock...." Bid.

There were two LPs released on Dindisc, both have since been deleted. The first was 'THE STRANGE BOUTIQUE', "Cherry Red and I were talking about buying up the rights. We might do that and re-release them. It's a crying shame that you can't buy 'The Strange Boutique' album," Bid.

"LOVE ZOMBIES was an incredible mistake. We came back from touring and had to do another LP because we needed the money. No other band I can think of could have written that album in two weeks, which we did. Some of the songs are fucking good. Overall it wasn't good enough to stop the backlash that followed," Bid.

"TEN DON'TS FOR HONEYMOONERS" was a one-off release for the Monochrome Set on Pre Records. The band then signed to Cherry Red Records. The first single release was, "THE MATING GAME". "Kajagoogoo would get with the lyrics in 'Mating Game'. The D.J.'s know what the content is. Not playing it because of the lyrics was being hypocritical. I knew they wouldn't. We do not use sexual phrases like, 'Get down on it'. 'Mating Game' was very sexual. The object was different though, it was funny. The lyrics were brought out in the song. The D.J.'s didn't like that, they don't want to confront what they're doing," Bid. The B side was a touching tribute to J.D. Hancy, a previous drummer for the band.

"CAST A LONG SHADOW". "Very good song, if it had been done well: Some guitar bits taken out completely, there was so much middle A, this riff, that keyboard solo. It wasn't really a song to put out as a single. There was too much on it," Bid. The B side was entitled 'The Bridge'.

"JER SET JUSTA". "Would have preferred to release it last August. The song was about the Falklands, the radio stations would have banned it, at the time. The single was a short demo version, again with too much going on, in it. There was a six minute version on the first Cherry Red LP, 'Eligible Bachelors'. That would have been worse as a single, but it's okay as an album track. A lot of the songs on the album were wasted. The production in the studio could have been better. It turned out worse than 'The Strange Boutique' production-wise," Bid.

The follow up, 'VOLUME CONTRAST BRILLIAN CE' is a curious compilation of sessions, demos and selected early releases. "It was the record company's idea. We agreed that it would be interesting. The clips of talking between tracks were already linked with the tracks when we took them from tapes," Bid.

The LP was a mid price album. The cassette version included 'Eligible Bachelors' on the other side. "If we had had to spend money to record them it would have been the same price," Andy.

EN: At the moment there is definitely a revival of interest in the Monochrome Set.

BID: "It's nice, interest in the press. The next step is up to us. We've had this before. We'll have to take a bigger step this time with things we've never actually

tried before. We've always maintained an underground existence, never tried to break out. The success of a record depends a lot on the record company. We left Rough Trade for financial reasons. If a band sells singles effortlessly they can probably be successful with a major company behind them."

ANDY WARREN: "Dindisc were the wrong company to move to, they just fell apart."

BID: "They didn't give us encouragement to go in a certain direction, which they should have. They didn't encourage us, they told us, which we didn't like. They didn't do as much for us as they did for Martha and The Muffins and OMD. They weren't a very good company unless they concentrated their efforts. They were fantastic when they put their machinery into motion. After 'The Strange Boutique', they put us in a file and put us away. They lost interest because it wasn't immediately successful. We felt secure after 'The Strange Boutique'. We got rave reviews in all the papers for the LP. Our live and singles reviews were good. After that, we didn't try too hard which is probably why the interest faded. The press changed completely in three months. In the second half of the same year Love Zombies got slagged. There wasn't a good single or gig review either. All prior to that had been glowing. We were expected to be 1980's version of Kajagoogoo. We're not like that at all, that is the image we seemed to give off and people hated us for it. I think the backlash was undeserved. We were not what they said we were. At the moment we are getting truly good or truly bad reviews. It's a nice balance, which is what it should be.

EN: Your music is not acclaimed as dance music, but I think it is.

ANDY: To people who know it, it is. To the others, it comes as a bit of a surprise.

FOZ: If people have lost the ability to dance to a straightforward rhythm they need to be re-educated.

Simon leaps in... "The music has a definite feel, how does it come together?"

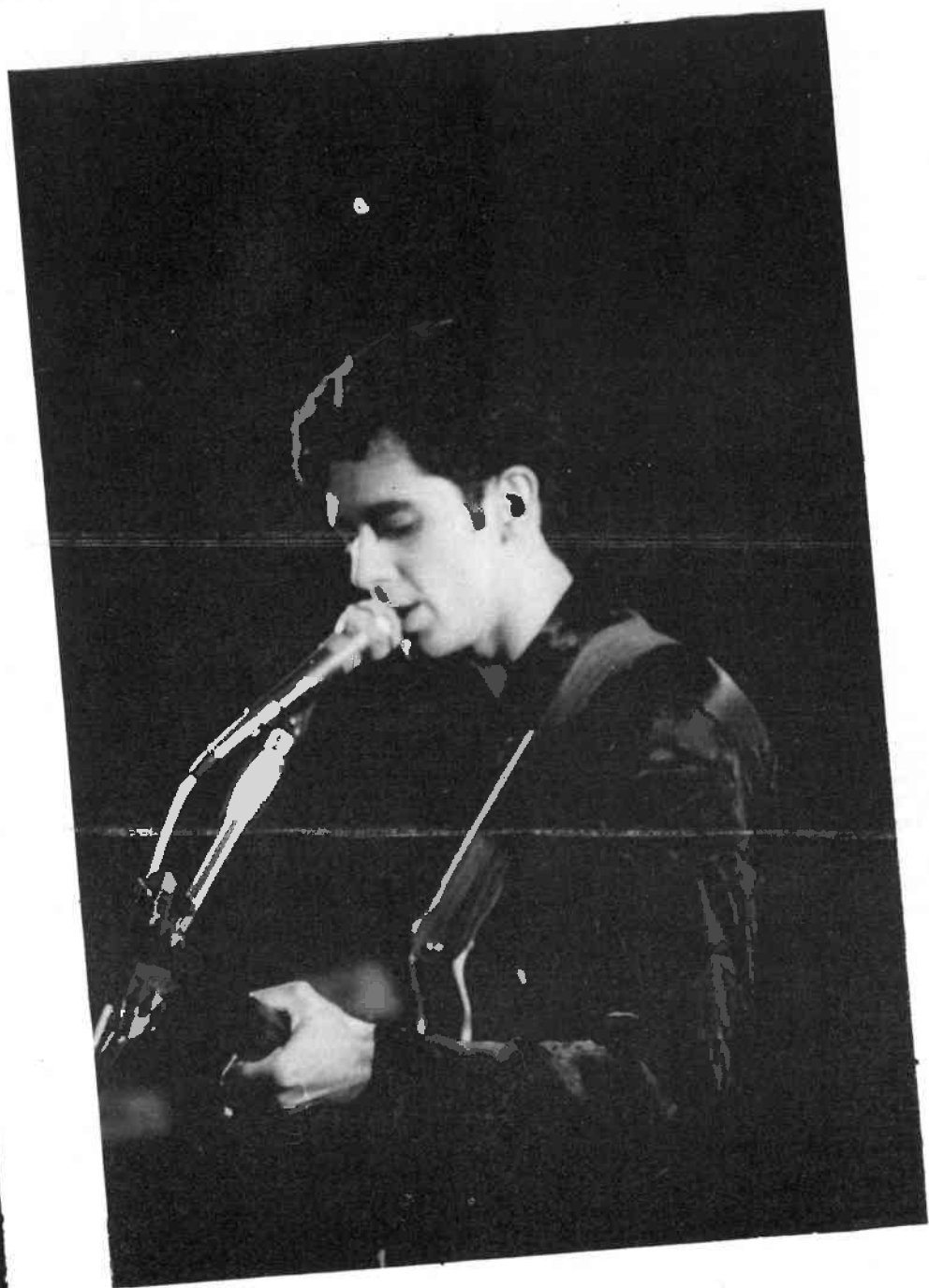
BID: Nothing special about the way we work.

NICK: The end is different, we're weird you see. (Humour).

ANDY: We're one of the few groups that still use melodies.

BID: The feel and sound is better although it's not as gelled as it was. We've spent the last couple of months getting a feeling in the new line up. We still feel uncomfortable playing with one another. The sound has improved. The sound of the guitars I like, suits me more. Lester's style was

ESN



the monochrome set



actually his own. I didn't like all of his stuff. We've dropped the idea of keyboards and no guitars. A mixture is better. Recently we've been playing without keyboards. It would have been tedious to take a new keyboard player around with us touring. We do not have a permanent one yet. Karie left us because she was going deaf. She joined the Thompson Twins, it doesn't matter with them. The guitar is more intricate on stage to compensate. We've used keyboards on most of our records and will continue to do so. Our style has changed, shifted emphasis, but at rehearsals the sound seems the same as it was five years ago, basically playing pop music. We got to a very advanced stage early on and ever since have kept up a high standard in writing.

ANDY: We wouldn't have released what we didn't consider a good song. A lot of groups don't know the difference.

BID: We didn't do our growing up in public. The early singles sound like early singles. Except 'Alphaville, any of them could have easily been part of any of the albums. Each song is basically very different though. We don't have a single mono style. We don't move in any way. We're already nowhere as such. We're just everywhere. All powerful.

I vaguely, describe Monochrome Set music and mood, as I see it. Freddy 'Fingers' Foster realises Bid has shut his gob, seeing his chance, Fos leaps in....

FOZ: If you write a proper song then it's far more listenable. You can see through the affects and the 80's sound. Therefore you are carried along. A lot of 80's music... you sit back and say, "that's a lovely affect he's got on his guitar synth."

NICK: Producers become more important than the band.

FOZ: Dance music can be based on one solid riff because it doesn't interrupt your dance. There's nothing better than a good song you can follow somewhere though. Music has always been a progression. The song itself is a progression based on man's history of music. To go back to incredibly simple songwriting, which 80's bands have, to produce such naive songs, is a regression. Our form is much more a progression. That is what creates the mood of the song itself.

ESN: Do you see yourselves aspiring commercially? As the saying goes.

FOZ: The music is inherently commercial. It just needs a good 80's producer, lyrics that won't offend and good press. There it is. As far as I can see, being a relatively new member, the Monochrome Set have never wanted commercial success before, they played on the underground feel.

ANDY: I beg to differ on that.

FOZ: Really? As an ex-punter so as to speak, I always saw the Monochrome Set as giving off an air of, 'we are an underground band'. You never went out of your way to be commercial or follow trends.

ANDY: That makes us sound like idiots who never thought about it. We were doing what we wanted to do at the time.

ESN: Do you feel as though you have got nowhere in five years?

BID: No I don't. We do command an audience and a price. That's not getting nowhere. It means we've been going a slightly longer period of time than other bands have. We're an old fashioned band. That's what old fashioned bands do.

ANDY: Some do, some don't stay together.

BID: The actual band carries on.

ANDY: Some of the band anyway.

BID: Name of the band anyway.

FOZ: Institution.....religion.

The main hindrance recently for the Monochrome Set must have been line up changes. It now seems fairly settled as Bid-rhythm guitar and vocals (the only all-time Monochrome Set man). Andy-bass (who leapt aboard in 'The Strange Boutique'). Fos-guitar (recently leapt in as Lester leapt out). Nick-drums (also fairly recent). As Andy, who is provocative but only ever indicated to me what he meant in conversation, states strongly, "we still have our personal differences." Basically I think no one agrees with the words of Gnash Shahedri.

SIMON MCKAY

sex gang children

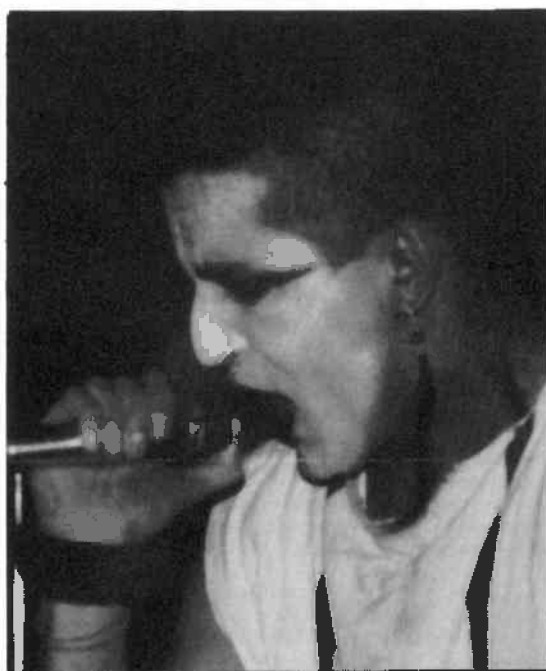
One of the first things Sex Gang Children released was the 'Naked' cassette. Originally, there were only two hundred copies made. There were another thousand made later, when the band could afford it, and sold on the March tour.

"Loads of people still wanted it. We thought it would be better to release some more, rather have people selling their copies for loads of money, or have people bootleg them," Andy.

The tape was of an early gig, it features a number of tracks the band no longer perform. I ask Andy if he would prefer to release live recordings. "It's two different worlds. We love recording records. It was really good doing the album. It took nine days. If it had taken much longer than that, we would have got bored and started pissing about. We were recording it in a place where there was nowhere to go. We couldn't go to the movies. We just had to work. Which is what we wanted to do. The producer, Tony James, we were working with was really good, although in a sense he wasn't really a producer, he's more of an ideas person. He would walk around, ping! and he'd have an idea. We had to replace the engineer though. He was a pile of shit. It took him about four hours to get a basic sound for drums and guitar, then it was still shit. He started complaining about the studio. The reason we had chosen it was because of things we had heard, that had been recorded, there, like 'Telegram Sam', by Bauhaus."

As well as the LP 'Song and Legend', Sex Gang Children have released three singles. The contract signed with Illuminated Records only ran this far. The LP has figured strongly in the independent charts, so presumably the contract will be renewed. Andy comments on the band's status, "A record company, especially a major, would rather have a band who have done nothing, if they have a perfect image and popsongs. Then they can be marketed. They would call a band like us a cult band, who will never sell anything."

Andy talks about the songs, "We're not trying to ram points down people's throats.



We're trying to make good music, get more excitement into gigs. Music just gives people pleasure. If it gives strength as well, then it's subversive. Society does not cater to give people strength. It tries to condition them into being placid. If people remember the strength and energy, then it's not wasted. Maybe if they're being wound up the next day, it won't bother them as much. People tend to expect a lot, but there's not a lot you can do. You can be a catalyst and bring something out that is already in people. Everyone's capable of being whatever they want to be. Everybody's capable of being a certain character. Everyone has a thousand different characteristics. Bringing things out in people shouldn't be left to bands. Anybody can do it. Bands are expected to come out with deep political statements and intellectualise on the music. Why can't people take it on a face value. If it stands in a strong position, then it is a subversive element. It's a powerful force, if something makes you feel good. If it is something you can identify with, it can give you strength."

ADVERTISING RATES

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, SEE PAGE 2.

BLACK

"We chose Black as the name because we just wanted a tag. People should see the name and not think of any particular type of music. It didn't work," Dicks laughs, "but that was the idea. People think we're dead gloomy."

Presently Black are Colin and Dicks. On stage Colin sings, and Dicks alternates between piano and guitar. The rest of the sound is provided on tape. The tapes were made by the two members. In the studio Dicks usually does all the controls. "He usually sits back and listens. I tend to get too involved with what's happening. He can say 'no that needs changing.' It's an intricate relationship in the studio. It is completely different to what happens on stage," comments Dicks. "When one of us gets too involved to see what we're doing, it happens that the other is less interested and can stand back and see things in a more general way," Colin.

"It works really well. We're total opposites to one another. Ideas are flying around constantly." "We use other people, sometimes by accident, usually playing instruments we can't."

"Anyone who's passing through."

Black were originally a three piece, without Dicks. Colin played guitar as well then, there was a bassist and drummer. When they went, Colin was left with his songs that had not been recorded. When he and Dicks got together they worked on these songs, as a tryout. "We've been working together since last July. The relationship hasn't had the chance to build properly yet. It's just starting to gel now that we're writing together. Until last Christmas we were just working on his old songs. I was just working on the desk and trying to arrange them. Now it's turning into more of a partnership. We're getting to know each other now, so things are working better. It's going well, which is more satisfying," Dicks.

Anything that Dicks is not going to play on stage, is featured on the backing tapes. A few treatments to sound that can not really be done live are featured. Dicks describes this as 'cheating to good effect.'

"We've taken the backing vocals off now. We used them for a while, just doing it so everything except the main vocal was on tape. We've just been steadily taking things out.

Eventually it will probably end up being a band again." Colin.

"At the moment this is the easiest format to use. It would be grossly unfair to us to expect anybody to play with us for nothing, which is all we could give them, and not give them some say in what we're doing. We're total megalomaniacs, we want total say in what we do in the songs. It would be unfair to have someone, more or less as a musical machine to play the music and not get anything from it: Except the pleasure of our company, which is rather dubious anyway." Dicks.

Black do not consider themselves as much of a live band. Dicks says they're not even a band, file that comment in the Scous humour section though. "It depends on the person. Some people take exception to the fact that we use tapes. Some people just ignore the fact and listen to the songs. All we're doing at the moment is showcasing the songs. It's a bit like one of those horrible public appearances, but nowhere as contrived because we're actually trying. We're told that we sound like a band," Colin.

Black usually write songs by building on an idea together. Sometimes they will go into the studio with nothing and just mess around, there is usually some semblance of a song at the end of the day. "We experiment to find what will be best suited for each role. It could take a few weeks to get a song just right," Dicks.

"That sounds cynical and craftsman-like. We like to use first takes, with all the mistakes on it. That's one of the reasons we sound 'live'. You have to have some fun to offset the gloom. We're not particularly gloomy though; some of the tracks are a bit intense, man!"

Tongues can get stuck in cheeks, but Colin continues; "There is always something going against the grain. I prefer to do the guitars and bass in the studio and just sing live. That's partly because you have to do something to hold an audience's attention. It would be unfair to just expect people to sit there and be enthralled."

Black have released 'More Than The Sun' on Wonderful World Of, which is a subsidiary of Eternal Records. They consider it to have been a mistake, as they did not do it very well. They do not play it live, as there is not a suitable backing track.

FARMERS BOYS

Frog gazes pensively at the two complex instruments on the table, at least one of which should have been recording our conversation. "Which one are you recording on?" Frog's question was due to the lack of locomotion concerning both machines. "Hum.... start again?"

ESN: Farmers Boys' music comes over as being a shade on the wacky side.

BAZ: There are no ideals at all. It's good fun; The first thing that comes into our heads sort of thing. We're all fairly simple. There is no hidden meaning behind anything we've done. We just sort of formed the group to the best of our ability and started off with very limited resources. We couldn't afford a drummer, so we bought a £50 drum machine.

ESN: Do you want a drummer?

BAZ: I don't know. I suppose we might do one day. It depends on which direction we go in. Direction is inverted commas there. Obviously we're not going to plan any sort of direction it'll just happen. As for the songs, I suppose they are about unrequited teenage love. I never really know what to say in interviews. We don't do a lot. We haven't got a great deal to say for ourselves.

ESN: You did not merely re-release 'Muck It Out', on ENI, but totally remixed it. Was the original such a disappointment?

BAZ: We started all over again sort of thing. It might have been an idea to reissue the original. That was how we played the song then. The new version is how we would like to play it, if we actually could. We stuck so many overdubs on the single that we don't really worry about recreating the sound live. As far as the record goes; we just wanted to make as good a record as humanly possible, and if it means loads of overdubs and we can't recreate that live, that's our tough luck.

ESN: What were you looking for on the remix?

BAZ: We actually used a producer on it. The first one we just thrashed out sort of thing. This time we actually sat down with a producer and thought about the song; how best to structure it. Basically, we aimed

If I was a journalist I could compare Black to Bloncmange, it would be very convenient. Musically they are far apart. Bloncmange sound like a duo. Colin bears slight similarity to Neil Arthur and comments, "I can identify with him. He's got a strange manner and a dry sort of humour." As for comparing Dicks to Stephen Luscombe, hnn..... no thanks.

SIMON MCKAY

FARMERS BOYS

the single at Radio 1 daytime market.

ESN: That's a shame.

BAZ: It was more or less a deliberate move to get on radio and hopefully have a hit with it.

ESN: You may want success, it seems a little bizarre that you should have to tread other people's paths to make any kind of impact.

BAZ: We didn't do anything we didn't want to do. If this producer chap had said, 'Well, I think you should do such and such on this, to make it sound more commercial', we would have said 'no'. It still has the casio on it, which he didn't want to use. We demanded that it was on. It wouldn't be a Farmers Boys' record without that pathetic casio noise on, totally running it.

ESN: I liked the mix on the first single.

BAZ: It was so primitive. There is something about the first two singles. I think it was the studio they were recorded in. That studio seems to have it's own sound.

ESN: The second single was 'Whatever Is He Like'.....

BAZ: That was the jangly guitar one. It got us accused of being Orange Juice soundalikes. We have a bit of a cult following because of the first couple of singles. They do sound fresh, amateurish and different. I think a few people will be upset that we have moved away from that. You can't carry it on forever though.

STAN: Ask us some in-depth questions. Probe into our.....

ESN: What do you do in Norwich.

BAZ: Go to the pub, go to the Jaquard, go to the pub, go to parties.

ESN: Do you ever get up and play?

STAN: No.

ESN: Do you ever play on roundabouts?

STAN: No.

ESN: On the top of climbing frames?

STAN: No.

ESN: Well, I think you should!

BAZ: We never play in Norwich Nobody there likes us. They liked us while we were still their little group. As soon as you out, and gain popularity elsewhere they don't like it anymore. They look for another Norwich band,

FROG: All of a sudden you're posing down the pub, instead of having a beer with your mates.

BAZ: Somebody who you really hate, and really don't want to talk to because they're so boring..... Before you could just ignore them, and they'd think, 'Oh, he's ignoring me because I'm boring'. Now if you ignore them, they think it's because you're a rocketar. It's not. You still think they're boring.

ESN: What do they say?

STAN: 'Where have you been lately then?', 'What's it like being famous?'

ESN: 'Can I interview you for my magazine?'

BAZ: Yeah, that's the kind of thing.

ESN: Can you drive a tractor?

BAZ: Not very well. My parents' house overlooks a farm. When I was a little boy, I used to fish in a lot of arm ponds.

FROG: Stan smells like one.

ESN: Tell us some Stan jokes.

BAZ: No, we can't give him a hard time.

STAN: I don't mind. I'll tell you them: There's the potato one..... I can't remember it. You tell him.

BAZ: When you're a kid you have little plastic ears, hats, noses, feet, arms and all that. You would then scrounge a potato, and make a potato man. We made a guitarist with one..... And of course we have to be off-stage by 11.30 p.m., otherwise Stan turns into a pumpkin.

FROG: As you can see he's already started.

ESN: Do EMI give you free cups of coffee?

BAZ: Loads mate, free beer, take you out for meals. They're great blokes. We expected them all to wear cowboy boots and satin tour jackets. They're quite surprised at us. A lot of the groups on EMI storm around the building.

ESN: Break things? Throw plants around? Break plant pots and put the soil down secretary's backs? and sabotage typewriters?

BAZ: He's done it, he must have done. Are you signed to EMI?

STAN: We just go down and scrounge as much as possible out of them. We hang around all day really, until somebody feeds us, and then we can go home.

So what else is new?

UNDERTONES

It is a while since those urchins of pop, The Undertones, have been featured on a family programme like Top Of The Pops. They are still an important band. Even the Daily Mirror has used them in one of their fairytales. You do remember that one about Snow White Mirror and The Five Tones don't you? That is when the Mirror tried to convince the nation that the band had split.

FEARGAL: That was shight. We think we know what happened. We've been trying to sort out Irish dates for the last three or four months. We've had the full stage production on tour and we wanted to take the lot to Ireland. People there are paying £3.50, £4 a ticket, so they're just as entitled to the full stage show as people here. In the end we couldn't get it sorted out. We kept arranging venues and having to pull out. The first thing we knew is an Irish paper phoned the office saying they had heard we were going to break up. It was just shight. After producing 'The Sin Of Pride' do you think we're about to break up?

ESN: 'With it being a long tour, they may have seen it as a sort of farewell.'

FEARGAL: It's a big tour by everyone else's standards. For the Undertones, it's not a big tour. Twenty three-twenty four dates, the biggest tour was close on forty. For us this is a bit of a doddle. I'm still feeling quite healthy, and we're getting to the end of it.

ESN: You still enjoy playing live as much?

FEARGAL: We spent the best part of last year in our own studio recording 'The Sin Of Pride'. To actually get out, playing live is quite a change. Everybody's really enjoyed themselves.

ESN: You've been quiet for so long.

FEARGAL: We've been quiet in the public eye, but as a band we've been working our arses off. Although it's nearly two years since we last played in England, after the last English tour we fucked off to Europe. We were there until the end of '81. It was only last year that we sat down and wrote enough songs for four LPs, never mind 'The Sin Of Pride'.

ESN: Do you have any intentions for the other songs?

FEARGAL: We'll stick a few out as B sides. When the usefulness of the album is exhausted we'll probably stick out a three or four track EP in the Summer of unheard

songs. We've loads of Material lying about. Loads of it! It's a nice position to be in.



ESN: "Are you still writing more?"

FEARGAL: We don't write at all, when we're on the road. Forget it, refuse to do it. We won't get round to any for the next few months.

ESN: You think it's true that your writing would get in a rut if it was done on the road?

FEARGAL: Yeah, you start writing shight like 'I'm in my hotel room, and my baby's a thousand miles away.' Who, the fuck, wants to listen to that?

ESN: Are your surroundings so much more varied at home?



FEARGAL: Michael and Damien got a band together in Derry with a friend. They played at an art gallery with a few local bands for a laugh. They came up with the idea for the song which we sorted out in rehearsals. It was just the guitar line originally.

Undertones gigs are usually pretty exhausting for everybody, the band, audience, barstaff and security. Feargal expects 'to be fucked' after a show, if he is performing with any sincerity and conviction. It is the Undertones enthusiasm that rubs off on the audience, but a lot of thought goes into the show. It is not all gut feeling.

FEARGAL: I suppose you could call it psychology, as to how we treat the set: What songs go where, and what we are trying to achieve by putting a song in that place. We try to control the audiences thoughts and emotions. We put fast and exciting songs together to get the audience going. The slower ones are to emphasise the visuals, lights and shit, to relax them. Then we bring them up again.

ESN: Is there also great thought behind the much-progressed sound?

FEARGAL: Yeah, basically. It varies at home you can get ideas when you're just sitting on your arse doing nothing. Sometimes it's good when you're at rehearsals and you come up with an idea. There's no one fixed situation like sitting down and saying 'I'm going to be creative for the next three hours.' It just doesn't work that way.

ESN: You write the songs as a group?

FEARGAL: Usually, one of us comes up with an idea, and we bash it around until we have a finished product. Or we might get bored after ten minutes and do something else instead, and forget it. We're like that at times. We have about seventy songs on record. We've written, literally, thousands, a lot of which don't get past the first ten minutes.

ESN: So you will never be stuck for ideas?

FEARGAL: No, you can always go back and resurrect them. Just before Christmas we went through a period when we had no new ideas. So to keep ourselves moving; we went back to older songs that we had ditched. Then we got back into it, and new ideas started to flow. It helps you over a rut.

ESN: As an example, how was 'The Love Parade' written?

FEARGAL: We did deliberately want to change the sound of The Undertones. a) we were getting bored with it. b) This is now '83 and not '78. People would not be willing to accept the sound of '78 now. We want, to push ourselves a bit further, rather than rehashing 'Jimmy, Jimmy', to see what else we can do. There's a lot of computerised keyboards and all that kind of balls on the new album, loads of things like that. It took us a long time to pick the right producer for the album, which held things up. Having worked in our own studio, working on arrangements and demos, we had very fixed ideas of what we wanted to do. We wanted somebody who was going to help us with that, and not try and influence us, as most producers do. We wanted somebody who will help make our thoughts into sounds, which is what a producer should do.

As vaguely outlined the Undertones intend releasing a three or four track EP in the Summer. This will be followed by a tour, which will extend into early Autumn. The Undertones intend it to be a longer tour than the last, it may not be such a doddle.

That is exactly what Feargal had to say, as you probably know the Undertones have split. Feargal, you stand accused of being a hypocrite.

SIMON MCKAY