

# Un\_stuck

Band Posters From The Christchurch City  
Libraries Archives (1980–89)

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# Real Graphic Design

LUKE WOOD

Over the last twenty-something years my life has gone full circle. In the early 1990s I went to art school at the University of Canterbury because I'd discovered there was a thing called graphic design—a thing I thought I might like as I'd already been making posters for bands I'd been in at high school. The discovery that this thing was a potential job kind of blew my mind. However it wasn't long before I learnt that doing posters for bands wasn't 'real graphic design', according to my lecturer, Max Hailstone. He was more interested in a graphic design that solved the critical problems of society—signage systems for hospitals or airports, or typefaces for dyslexic children, that sort of stuff. Posters for bands were okay to do in your spare time, but were far too subjective and self-indulgent to be brought to class. And so eventually I drank Max's modernist kool-aid, gave up on my childish ambitions, and became a 'real graphic designer' (of sorts). Twenty-something years later however, I find myself back in Christchurch, playing in bands and making band posters again, while also teaching at the school I once studied at.

Possibly because I didn't see eye-to-eye with

1. Thanks to Noel Waite for pointing this out to me some years ago. There are now a small handful of books that do address components of graphic design history in New Zealand. Books like *Paste Up* and *Cover Up* by Hamish Thompson, *Joseph Churchward* by David Bennewith, and *Mark Cleverley* by Jonty Valentine. Also, *Selling The Dream* and *Promoting Prosperity* by Peter Alsop are useful in a basic sense, and Christopher Thompson's *A New Zealand Design History Blog* is incredibly in-depth and often touches on aspects of graphic design.
2. I've long been an acolyte of William Pater's proposition that; "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music." From his essay 'The School of Giorgione', *Fortnightly Review*, 1877.
3. The course these students are enrolled in is a four-year degree, beginning with an intermediate year of multi-disciplinary work, and then specialising in graphic design for the following three years. So they still have a year and a half to go after the production of this publication.

my lecturer, I developed an interest in various histories and theories of graphic design. Knowledge that, if Max was still around, I'd be able to use to defend and validate the pop-cultural ephemera that I was interested in. Unfortunately Max isn't still around, and times have changed anyway. It isn't at all contentious anymore for students of graphic design to be so interested in the affects of popular culture. Graphic design, like any healthy discipline, remains in flux. What it does, how it does it, and what it's called, are all questions we keep asking as culture and technology move on (for better or worse).

With these sorts of questions in mind I have occasionally set projects, like this one, that require my students to engage in primary historical research. Also, in part, because while histories of European, English and American design are readily available, the history of graphic design in New Zealand still largely resides in boxes and drawers of private homes, in peoples' heads, and in the archives of various institutions around the country.<sup>1</sup>

The posters in this collection in the Christchurch City Libraries Archives come from a specific place (Christchurch) and time (the archives say 1980–89, but the posters we've looked at were all done prior to 1984). A place and time in which fairly radical new attitudes and approaches emerged in respect to the performance, production, and reproduction of local music. Imaginative new forms of music have often come hand-in-hand with equally inventive visual responses—correlatives in the form of album covers, music videos, and posters. In fact I'd argue that a decent amount of the more important graphic design of the later part of the 20th Century occurred in specifically these formats. Music has been, and still often is, a driver of new developments in visual language.<sup>2</sup> This project was set to encourage students to consider this generative and dynamic disciplinary relationship in a specifically local context

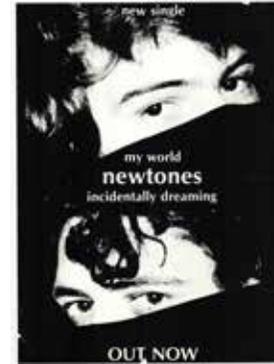
I should point out that the students who have put this book together—the content, the design, the printing and binding—are students of graphic design, not history. As third-year fine arts students/second-year design

students<sup>3</sup> they have all had to do some art history papers, but they come to this material as nascent practitioners, not researchers and writers of history. That's not to make excuses, simply to allude to a difference in approach.

One of the things that interested me personally, as the students started bringing their research to class meetings, was finding out who'd actually made these posters. Most of the posters in this collection immediately appear to have been 'designed' by amateurs, or dilettantes—appropriate given the nature and attitude of the bands they represent, and many of them are in fact designed by members of the bands themselves. Some of these were done by students (sometimes recently graduated) from Christchurch Polytech's design and illustration courses. Some others were done by students from the film, photography, and sculpture courses at the Ilam School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury. Interestingly—sadly, from my perspective—there was no evidence of anyone from the graphic design course at the university being involved. Of course what we're looking at here is a very small sample of what would have actually been produced and stuck up on the streets at the time. But from my own experience I can't help but speculate that this might point back to that attitude I encountered in the same course some ten years after these posters were produced—that making band posters wasn't considered to be 'real graphic design'?

All of the posters here have been accessed and reproduced via the collections of the Christchurch City Libraries Archives, with—in most cases—the permission of the original designer.<sup>4</sup> The posters that appear in this publication can be seen online,<sup>5</sup> but there are also more in the collection that are yet to be digitised (that are not reproduced here). I wish to thank Paul Sutherland and Rosemary O'Neil from the Christchurch City Libraries for their help. Also Bruce Russell, who, in many cases, pointed us in the right direction. And, of course, everyone who communicated with the students, everyone who made these posters, and everyone who played in these bands.

4. The students have worked hard to track down the original designers of each poster. In some cases this hasn't been possible. Please do contact me (Luke Wood) at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts if you have any further information or corrections to this information.  
5. <http://christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Posters/Music/Rock/1980-1989/thumbnails/>



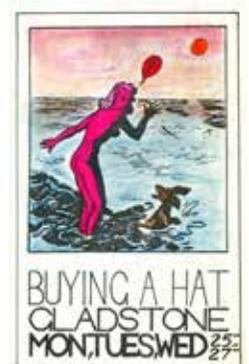
Poster\_0032



Poster\_0055



Poster\_0033



Poster\_0069



Poster\_0008



Poster\_0026



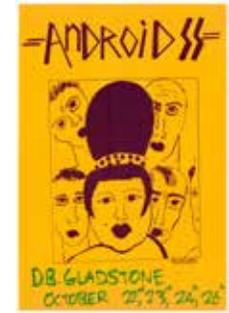
Poster\_0005



Poster\_0036



Poster\_0053



Poster\_0013



Poster\_0041



Poster\_0006



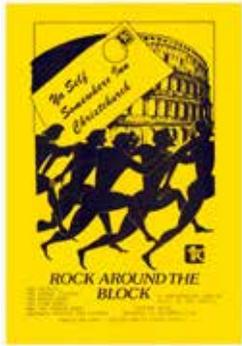
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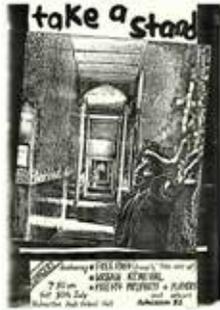
Poster\_0052



Poster\_0002



Poster\_0039



Poster\_0062



Poster\_0042



Poster\_0004



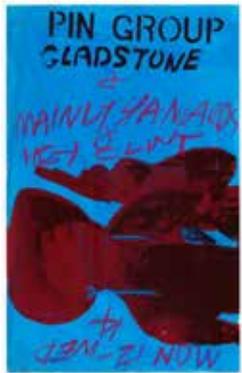
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Poster\_0054



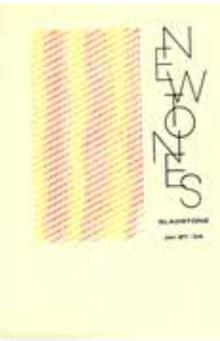
Poster\_0028



Poster\_0001



Poster\_0011



Poster\_0022



Poster\_0040



Poster\_0015



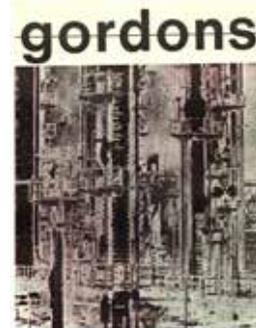
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Poster\_0045



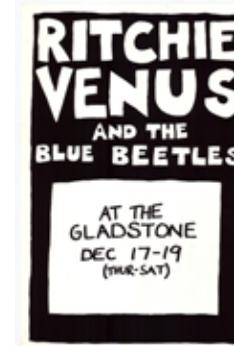
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Poster\_0024



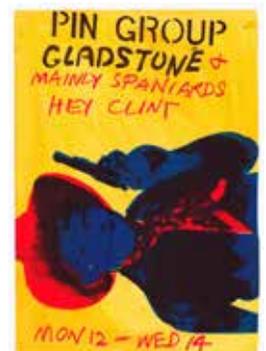
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Poster\_0023



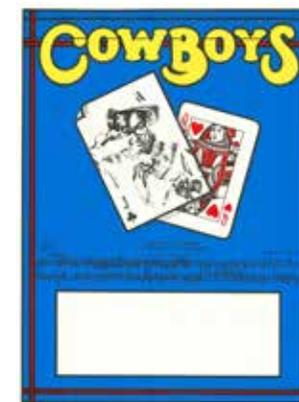
Poster\_0038



Poster\_0021



Poster\_0056



Poster\_0020



Poster\_0019



Poster\_0007



Poster\_0057



Poster\_0071



Poster\_0037



Poster\_0049



Poster\_0012



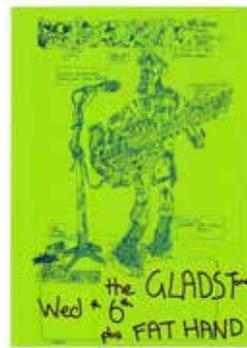
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Poster\_0014



Poster\_0031



Poster\_0047



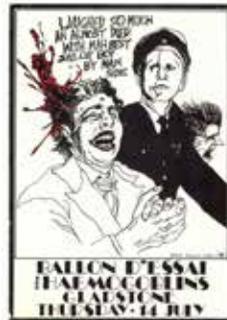
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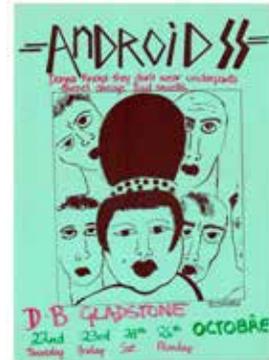
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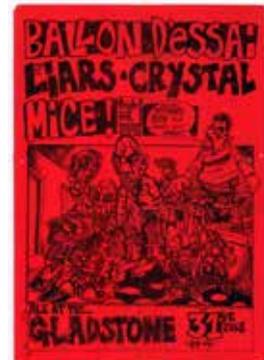
Poster\_0027



Poster\_0018



Poster\_0018



Poster\_0043



Poster\_0016



Poster\_0048



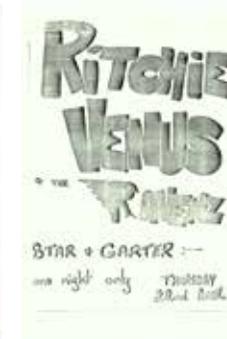
Poster\_0070



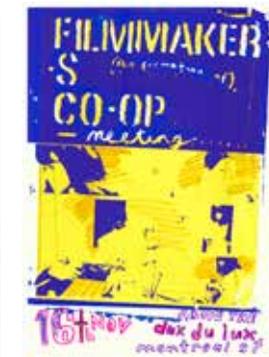
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Poster\_0064



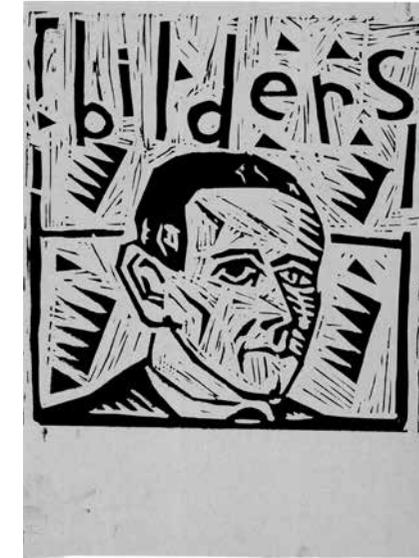
Poster\_0043



Poster\_0066

## STELLA SALES

## Poster\_0003



Title:

Biders

Designer:

Ronnie van Hout

Date:

1982

Physical Description:

A3 single-sided poster

From the choice of stock to the identity of the man in the portrait and its wood/linocut production, this poster is distinctive within this collection of mostly hand-drawn illustrations or photocopy-quality images. The Biders featured a changing line-up of guests and collaborators all under the direction of song-writer Bill Direen. Direen was, and has continued to be, fairly prolific in terms of his musical output, and his work has been heavily influenced by his other interests in experimental theatre, poetry and literature.

Approaching Bill Direen about this poster, he informed me that it was designed and printed by Ronnie Van Hout, while also mentioning the possible influence of the 'Weimar period' and 'New German Expressionism'.<sup>1</sup> Van Hout himself states that; "the paper was cheap, butchers paper cut from a roll, which I probably got for free from somewhere. I was into New German Expressionism so it was printed from a hand cut piece of lino (or maybe wood)."<sup>2</sup> Ronnie also pointed out that the face on this poster is that of Tristan Tzara, one of the leading figures of the Dada movement in the early 20th Century. Dada, a reactionary art form, intended to

1. From a short communication through email with William 'Bill' Direen, March 2016.
2. From a short communication through email with Ronnie van Hout, March 2016.

disrupt bourgeois sensibility, has often been cited as a latent precursor to the punk movement of the late 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Direen’s interdisciplinary practice had a lot in common with the spirit of Tzara and Dada. It was van Hout who chose the image of Tzara however, stating that; “Bill just trusted me to do what I wanted, and the image seemed to fit what he was doing”. When I asked van Hout what he thought of Direen’s more theatrical performances he interestingly replied; “I was pretty much a heckler of this aspect of his work. All in the spirit of Dada. It only made Bill love me more.”

Like other posters by van Hout in this collection, this one was produced in the printmaking studios at the Ilam School of Fine Arts (University of Canterbury). As a student in film though, van Hout’s using the printmaking studio was not encouraged by the lecturers at the time, and got him banned from the studio. Van Hout describes his time at art school; “rejecting and reacting to the status quo”, in terms of making it a happy place for self-confessed outsiders like him.

I wondered how these extra-curricular music related projects might have influenced his later practice as a professional artist; “My practice is not directly influenced by the music-making scene, but I think the spirit of the time, the connection to a community, and doing things for yourself with a disdain for the mainstream, have certainly stayed with me.”

3. Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century* (1989)

# Poster\_0009

VICKEY ZENG

**Title:**  
Playthings  
**Designer:**  
Paul Kean  
**Date:**  
1983  
**Venue:**  
Hillsborough  
**Physical Description:**  
A3 single-sided poster



The Playthings (1980–82) began with one-off gigs at various venues such as the Gladstone and the Hillsborough Tavern, playing with other significant Christchurch post-punk bands like The Gordons. The Playthings gained in popularity very quickly, and they were often doing regular gigs headlining for three consecutive nights at The Gladstone during mid-1981.

Originally, the band consisted of two songwriters and vocalists, Jay Clarkson and Janine Saundercock. Clarkson and Saundercock also alternated between playing guitar and bass, while Nicki Carter played flute, guitar, and saxophone, with Dave Toland on drums. Saundercock left the band after the release of their first EP and Paul Kean (ex Toy Love), The Playthings manager at the time, joined playing guitar and bass.

Paul Kean designed the majority of The Playthings posters, including this one, clearly dedicated for gigs at the Hillsborough Tavern. The space in the middle left deliberately for the specific date of each gig. Every poster was individually screen-printed by hand, and often printed on recycled paper such as the heavy stock found on backs of calendars. Designing was a rather quick process

1. Email communication with Paul Kean on March 8th 2016.

for Kean.<sup>1</sup> This poster is layered with a background paper cut-out pattern, two floating cut-out semi-circles (possibly a reference to a sports field?), and cut-outs lettering spelling out the band's name and the venue. The uneven layering and rough finish demonstrate the speedy process. Sometimes Kean would ask other band members to sketch up the type on a smaller scale then Kean himself would enlarge and visually enhance them.

Like their peers, members of The Playthings were critical of the mainstream music industry in New Zealand at the time; "It was a time when we all embraced independence from the arrogant narrow-minded corporate music industry in NZ."<sup>2</sup> Their approach to advertising their gigs reflected this; "Cheap and quick to produce small print runs that added a human touch—we did our own poster distribution to record stores, cafes, venues and libraries plus paste up on the street."<sup>3</sup> The Playthings recorded and produced their own records, arranged their own record manufacturing, printing of covers, and also distribution to record stores around New Zealand.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid

# Poster\_0017

EMMA KEVERN

**Title:**  
Flying Nun Records:  
The Clean, Ying1 (FN002),  
The Pin Group. FN 001  
**Designer:**  
Paul Smith  
**Date:**  
1981  
**Physical Description:**  
A3 single-sided poster



This poster immediately stood out from others in the collection. Aesthetically it is quite distinct and I quickly learned that as a very early Flying Nun poster, it doesn't look like what we've come to expect from Flying Nun at all.

In fact this poster was where it all began. The bands represented here—The Clean and The Pin Group—were the first to be signed by Roger Shepherd, the founder of Flying Nun, and this is an advert for the label's first two seven-inch singles.

Rather than song names, this poster employs the record company catalogue numbers. And while The Pin Group release is labeled FN 001, The Clean actually released their single, YING 1 (FN002)—a song called 'Tally Ho'—first. Bands started to adopt their own numbering after this which went hand in hand with the intentionally relaxed and non-professional attitude of the record label.

This poster was intended to be the beginning of a consistent graphic identity, in line with independent UK labels of the time like Factory Records. Factory were known for their striking, and now iconic album covers for the band Joy Division. Designed by Peter Saville,



*Love Will Tear Us Apart*  
Joy Division, 1980  
Designed by Peter Saville  
Factory Records



*Tally Ho*  
The Clean, 1981  
Designed by Paul Smith  
Flying Nun Records

these record covers often employed a mysterious, yet very simple image in the centre of a frame with minimal text. Catalogue numbers were also used as esoteric signifiers much like in this poster. Saville's covers for Joy Division resonate, in a sense, with the atmosphere of the city of Manchester at the time—a marginalized industrial wasteland. This Flying Nun poster—dark, brooding, and mysterious—could be understood as an attempt at something similar in a city that could be gloomy, cold, dark and very conservative.

However while this poster might pay homage to Factory Records, it possibly misses the peculiarities of the specifically local post-punk scene that was emerging here. This poster and the very similar seven-inch sleeve for The Clean's single 'Tally Ho', don't really mesh with the band's actual sound, and all of the band's other posters and later covers are very different. In a brief interview with members of The Clean, it was apparent they really were not fans of this poster at all, saying that the posters and covers they created themselves captured their style better.<sup>1</sup>

Interviewing Roger Shepherd, he pointed out that his friend and was-going-to-be business partner, Paul Smith had designed this poster.<sup>2</sup> Paul was unavailable to talk to me but Roger also mentioned that this poster had been printed on a commercial offset press and that its odd shape had meant that it cost more than it probably should have.

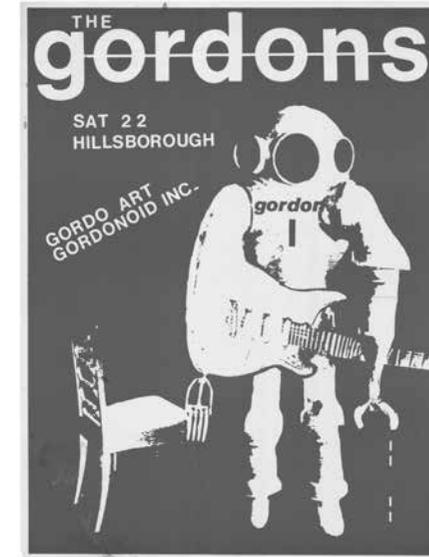
This poster represents an interesting moment in Flying Nun's history as most of the posters that came immediately after this were more hand-made looking, often employing screen printing and woodcuts of illustrations by band members themselves.

1. Interview via Facebook messenger with individuals Robert Scott, 13th March 2016 and then David Kilgour, 14th March 2016.

2. Email interview with Roger Shepherd, 16th March 2016.

# Poster\_0025

RAQUEL JOSEPH



**Title:**  
The Gordons.  
**Designer:**  
John Halvorsen  
**Date:**  
1980  
**Venue:**  
Hillsborough  
**Physical Description:**  
A2 single-sided poster

The Gordons were a significant band in the Christchurch scene in the early 1980s, before transforming into the more well-known Bailter Space, and moving to New York City. Playing a unique form of industrial rock music, they were infamous for being extremely loud. According to Rob Mayes of Failsafe Records; "They were reportedly the loudest band alive, and I can put my vote in to support this."<sup>1</sup> They continue to be influential on young bands today.

The original Gordons line-up was a three-piece made up of John Halvorsen, Alistair Parker, and Brent McLaughlin. The trio came together rather quickly, three days before their first gig at the Hillsborough, which Halvorsen had booked with Jim Wilson (a booking agent at the time). The only problem being he didn't actually have a band.

The poster was designed by Halvorsen in only half an hour, and was then printed and pasted all over Christchurch that very same night. In an email interview with Halvorsen, he discussed the process that the poster went through, saying; "It was done the size of a cigarette packet with Letraset, collage, pen and ink. An hour later it

1. 'The Gordons', by Rob Mayes, Failsafe Records website. <http://www.failsafe-records.com/history/gordons.htm>

was blown up to its full size (A2), delivered to the printers, and printed immediately.”<sup>2</sup> The whole process was very fast and effective, getting the word out, and people interested in the band before they’d even played their first gig.

The original poster was printed black on white paper. The orange and yellow poster in this collection was made from the same plate but printed in red ink onto yellow paper. This was done a month or two after the original posters were put up which was for the first gig on 22nd March 1980.<sup>3</sup>

Halvorsen mostly worked alone on the graphic design but did occasionally take on input from other band members. Alastair Parker also did some design work for the band too.

The ‘space diver’ figure that Halvorsen came up with for this first poster became a recurring motif for the band. Almost a ‘logo’. Halvorsen had studied graphic design at CTI (Christchurch Technical Institute, now known as CPIT) from 1978–79. Halvorsen explains his interest in bold symbolic images; “I became impassioned about corporate identity design, logos crossed over into my poster concepts as bold, iconic symbols.”<sup>4</sup> He also recalls being subconsciously inspired by childhood television shows such as a series from 1961 called Diver Dan, as well as the original Flash Gordon from the 1940’s, particularly the sci-fi style of design in these shows.

This first poster really set the visual tone for the trio, defining the Gordons as a band with an aesthetic that matched the band’s unique sound. Halvorsen expressed how important this first poster was as a starting point for the band; “The poster helped crystallise us as a band under this image, it gave us immediate attention, forward momentum, and a sense of identity that defined us to ourselves and to a generation.” This iconic image continues to work for them over thirty years after the band has stopped playing together as The Gordons.

2. Email interview with John Halvorsen, 29th March 2016.

3. “We reprinted the poster to re-use for other gigs, because we liked it and thought it was good to reinforce our identity over time. We used it as the second Gordons poster two or three years later, and also as Bailter Space, except that version had a circle around it with a strike through, as we were the same three people as the Gordons but yet it wasn’t the Gordons. With the reprint of the first batch, we printed new dates for each show and pasted those over the old dates (reversed out and same colour) to save money.”

Ibid.

4. Ibid.

CAITY SHANKS

# Poster\_0034

**Title:**  
Androids, Newtones,  
Playthings, Ritchie Venus  
**Designer:**  
Robin Neate  
**Date:**  
1982  
**Venue:**  
Gladstone  
**Physical Description:**  
A1 single-sided poster



Tony Peake set up the Newtones in 1981, a three-piece band consisting of Peake on guitar and vocals, Mark Brooks on bass and vocals, and Graeme Van Der Colk on drums. The band played numerous gigs, mainly at the Gladstone, over their two-year life-span and released two seven-inch records featuring original songs.

Tony Peake, singer and guitarist in the Newtones, was a critical figure in the Christchurch music scene due to his position running the music store at the University Bookshop (UBS). Due to strict import laws in New Zealand at the time, it was difficult for fans to access contemporary punk and new wave music that was being released in England. Peake was one of very few people interested and/or able to get these sorts of records since the university had a licence that would allow for overseas importing. Peake—an Australian import himself—would import records by significant underground bands from overseas and then sell them on to like-minded folk. The records he imported and sold were influential in the development of the burgeoning Christchurch music scene.

Whilst working at UBS Tony Peake met Robin



Other posters by Robin Neate for the Newtones, also in the collection of the Christchurch City Libraries Archives.

Neate who was also working at the bookshop. Neate had studied sculpture at the Ilam School of Fine Arts and Tony suggested he do some advertising work for the Newtones.

Speaking with Neate about the posters he made for the Newtones he said; “The whole punk thing was a part of it, with the cut up thing and pasting stuff together. That was an interest of mine”<sup>1</sup> As a fine arts student he was also aware of art history; “A kind of Russian constructivist Bauhaus sensibility started to come through.” And as a music fan more generally he also remembers “taking references from other album covers by similar bands.”

Neate kept a file of images he had cut out of magazines or had been given, and when he was asked to design a poster he would select some of these, blow them up on the best photocopiers he could find and arrange them on a page, pasting them down. This finished artwork would then be sent to the printers as separated layers.

Asked whether or not the poster specifically reflected the sound of the band Neate replied; “it kind of did, they were kind of a bit pop in a way, but they were a raw band. They were more new wave than punk. I think it did suit them.”

Having dabbled in graphic design doing these posters for the Newtones, Neate started to do paid design work for other clients. But it wasn't the same, he said, and clients would often change what he felt were his better ideas. “The great thing about those band posters was that most people just said we need a poster. Here are the bands, here's the date, and that was it. I would just go away and do it, and come back with the poster.”

1. Interview with Robin Neate by Caitly Shanks, 22nd March 2016.

# Poster\_0035

EILISH CAMERON

**Title:**  
Pin Group  
**Designer:**  
Ronnie van Hout  
**Date:**  
1983  
**Venue:**  
Gladstone  
**Physical Description:**  
A4 single-sided poster



The Pin Group were a short-lived post-punk band that played a significant early role in the developing underground music scene in Christchurch in the early 1980s. Their sound was compared to Joy Division, and while they were originally a three-piece band—Roy Montgomery on guitar and vocals, Desmond Brice then Ross Humphries on bass and vocals, and Peter Stapleton on drums—they were joined by Mary Heney and Peter Fryer in the last few months of the group's 17 month life-span. The Pin Group played “barely a dozen shows in the Garden City”<sup>1</sup> one of which being this show at the Gladstone.

Ross Humphries, a student at the University of Canterbury's Ilam School of Fine Arts in the early '80s, became good friends with fellow student Ronnie van Hout, who designed and printed this poster at the art school. Van Hout, now a well known New Zealand Artist (currently based in Melbourne), majored in film. His work however—as a student and then as professional artist—utilized various mediums and ignored disciplinary boundaries.

Van Hout offered to screen-print posters for the

1. Andrew Schmidt, 'The Pin Group Profile' on Audio Culture: The Noisy Library of New Zealand Music. <http://www.audioculture.co.nz/people/the-pin-group>



Variations of the same poster by Ronnie van Hout, also in the collection of the Christchurch City Libraries Archives.

band—this poster being one of many he did for The Pin Group—as he had access to screen-printing facilities at the art school. The hand drawn squiggles over top of the prints were due to van Hout thinking; “They were pretty shitty prints really so it was a way of trying to make them better.”<sup>2</sup>

In a place and time where art students tended to take themselves and their work awfully seriously van Hout, rather successfully, lent toward wit. An attitude which runs through van Hout’s practice to date, this same sense of (sometimes dark) humour is evident in these posters. Spock’s fake nose for example. These posters are also an early example of van Hout’s use of images from popular science-fiction, a genre of film and television he was interested in since childhood.

Van Hout’s use of Spock from the popular TV series Star Trek was significant, according to van Hout himself, due to his being an outsider/insider character, half human half alien. Relevant perhaps, given van Hout’s—and his friends’—interests, activities, and cultural outputs (visual arts, music, film) in a conservative New Zealand city in the early 1980s. It was easy to identify as an outsider.

Ronnie van Hout was not particularly interested in engaging with ‘mainstream’ culture at the time; “I identified with the failed and rejected (the definition of Punk) so I wasn’t very interested in the artworld, apart from being a somewhat cynical observer, jeering from the sidelines”.

2. Interview with Ronnie van Hout, email 16th of March 2016.

# Poster\_0061

LUKE SHAW

**Title:**  
Above Ground  
**Designer:**  
Stuart Page  
**Date:**  
1983  
**Venue:**  
Gladstone  
**Physical Description:**  
A3 single-sided poster



Stuart Page has become a bit of a design hero and an inspiration for me over the past couple of weeks. His work is sophisticated and engaging, he likes rock’n’roll, and he’s well educated in the purest form of graphic design—poster making. Above Ground was Stuart’s first band,<sup>1</sup> and this poster is significant because it serves as an example of a broader conversation we have been having around professionalism vs. dilettantism in graphic design.

Page’s poster sits in an interesting position in this conversation because it is obviously a DIY job, yet it is compositionally complex, and, I want to suggest, not totally amateur or naïve in this sense. Although he studied photography at the Ilam School of Fine Arts (University of Canterbury) in the late ’70s, he spent a lot of time in the Graphic Design studio under the suspicious eye of lecturer Max Hailstone. Something must have worn off on Page because looking through his body of work, there are definitely some fundamental understandings of certain conventions of graphic design at work. In particular his eye for typographic composition but also more broadly, I’m thinking of multi-disciplinary examples like his photographic screenprints of the infamous ’81 Springbok

1. Above Ground was a Christchurch band that briefly existed in the early 1980s. It consisted of Stuart Page, Bill Direen, Carol Woodward, and Mary-Rose Wilkinson. Stuart Page then went onto play drums in the Axemen, a band which he still plays in today.



Still from music video for 'Buddy' by Snapper, directed by Stuart Page, 1988.

tour protests and the amazing music video he made for the song 'Buddy' by Snapper.

Both more-or-less medium-specific pieces of work, they each represent Page's interests in conventions closely associated with graphic design. On one hand he turns photographs into multiples via the the mechanical reproduction process of screen printing, and on the other he employs a psychedelic layering of type and image in the video format. Both instances, while appearing to some extent naïve, point to an acute awareness of graphic design as a participant in, and product of, contemporary popular culture.

The DIY attitude of the punk/post-punk music scene and its associated visual language are self-evident here. A lot of the posters in this archived collection have this same hand-made quality to them, yet there is something particularly endearing about Page's take on hand-made. For one the fact that it is actually two pieces of A4 paper sellotaped together, rather than a full A3 sized sheet. More important however is the overwhelming mix of text and imagery that I can't help but now see in relation to the graffiti covered New York City subways that Page described to me.<sup>2</sup> The same graffiti covered subways that feature in Above Ground's video for the song 'Coalman'.<sup>3</sup> In regard to this layout, Page said he would simply spend hours arranging things on the light table until he felt that it "sat right". Working intuitively you might say.

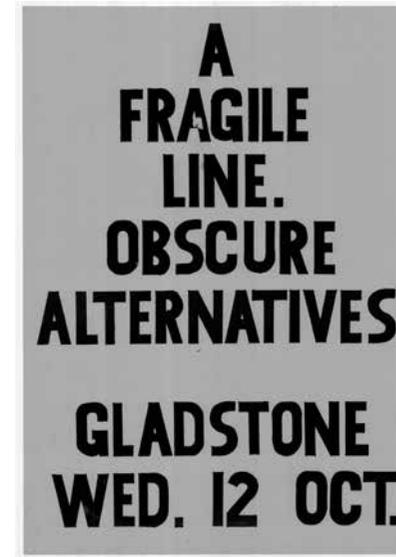
It is this tension between a certain logic (the domain of the professional) and intuition (the domain of the dilettante) that, from my perspective, makes this poster so engaging.

2. Interview with Stuart Page via Skype on 23rd March 2016. Stuart travelled to New York in 1982.

3. 'Coalman' was the only song Stuart wrote for Above Ground.

# Poster\_0063

RYAN PATRICK



**Title:**

A Fragile Line. Obscure Alternatives

**Designer:**

Dan Newnham

**Date:**

1983

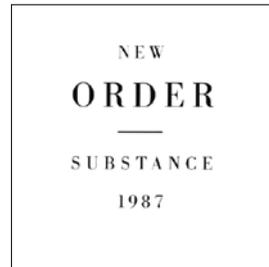
**Physical Description:**

A3 single-sided poster

No photos, no illustrations, no flair; just basic information presented clearly. The poster for A Fragile Line and Obscure Alternatives at the Gladstone hotel stands out amongst the other posters presented in this collection due to its striking simplicity. It was designed by Dan Newnham, a member of the band A Fragile Line, while in his first year of study at Ilam School of Fine Arts (University of Canterbury) in 1983. Newnham lined up some stencils, favouring them to his own handwriting, and produced the A3 poster quickly to get it out on the streets. No time or care for anything fancy, just get it out there and promote the gig.

A Fragile Line and Obscure Alternatives were paired by booking agents at The Gladstone for the night and the bands had little knowledge of, or interest in, each other. A Fragile Line consisted of Newnham (bass), David Jamieson (synth) and Caroline Gordon (percussion), and they produced music under the influence of New Order, or "synth alt pop" as Newnham describes it.<sup>1</sup> It could be said that the simplicity of the poster bears some resemblance to the aesthetic Peter Saville developed for New Order/Factory Records over this time and later into the 80s.

1. Interview via email with Dan Newnham on 26th 27th February 2016



**Substance**  
New Order, 1987  
Designed by Peter Saville  
Factory Records

It also represents an attitude of no frills and letting the music speak for itself, a concept Saville seems to have cultivated with many of his designs as well. To Newnham that's what mattered most—"what does it sound like?" What this poster demonstrates, especially when viewed in the context of this collection full of photographic appropriation and illustrative creativity, is the value of getting to the guts of something.

It could be argued that this type of attitude flourished in the post-punk Christchurch scene. Maybe it was a reaction to the decorative glut of safety-pins and other paraphernalia of the punk period. Maybe it was a sense of foreboding for the soon-to-be pervasive cloud of hairspray that would envelop the '80s. Whatever the reasons, a reactionary stripped back aesthetic and attitude fitted right into a Christchurch that was feeding off the burgeoning melancholic, if still somehow dance-worthy, alternative music scene that was spreading around university campuses and working class bars across the world. A scene where Ian Curtis was God, the pub was church and a local band was your post-punk preacher. A scene where a grey business shirt was the brightest thing you had in your closet and you only used a serif typeface if you wanted to feel a bit 'gothic'.

How does this relate back to a poster hastily thrown together for a gig consisting of a couple Christchurch bands all but lost to time? How much of this can you get from simply looking at the stark black on yellow design? What's it even saying? It's saying A Fragile Line and Obscure Alternatives are playing at the Gladstone on Wednesday October 12th and if you want to know more, you're going to have to go along and listen.

# Poster\_0065

JANELLE SANSON

**Title:**  
Kickin' skinnies at the  
Star & Garter  
**Designer:**  
Lorenzo Van Der Lingen  
**Date:**  
1983  
**Physical Description:**  
A3 single-sided poster



This poster was designed by Lorenzo Van Der Lingen in 1983, who, at the time, was a member of the band The Haemogoblins. The poster promoted three nights of shows by two bands; YFC (Youth for Christ) and The Haemogoblins. Van der Lingen's design for the poster was influenced by comic book art/illustration, something that he, and the rest of the band, were passionate about.

The fact that it is black-and-white actually makes it stand out from other posters in the collection which tend to be quite colourful. It is completely illustrated by hand including the text which playfully misspells the band's name with a 'z' rather than an 's' at the end. My initial interpretation of the picture was that the figure/creature must simply represent a 'Haemogoblin'. However, this image has an interesting story behind it.

This poster raised the ire of Christchurch's skinhead population in 1983, as 'skinny' was slang for skinhead. The slogan 'kickin' skinnies' caused local skinheads to mistakenly think this slogan was a direct attack on them. 'Kickin skinnies' was actually an obscure reference to the classic 'Charles Atlas' comic book ad, where 'skinny' gets bullied and gets sand kicked in his



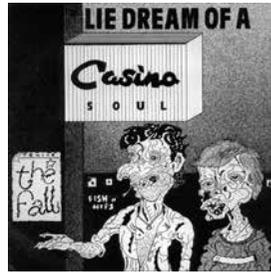
'The insult that made a man out of Mac'  
Charles Atlas advertisement from a 1974 comic book.

face. This conflict resulted in fists being thrown at the band members at one of the three shows performed at the Star and Garter in Christchurch.

Van Der Lingen also cites the cover of The Fall's *Lie Dream of a Casino Soul* single (1981) as an influence on this poster design. "The other major influence on my work was Art Spiegelman's *RAW* comics magazine, especially Gary Panter and Charles Burns."<sup>1</sup>

The Haemogoblins had a reputation as a novelty/satirical band, whereas YFC focused on more serious alternative music. Interestingly YFC posters tended to use less illustration and focused more on type-setting and photography. "Thanks to having my brain SERIOUSLY rewired by The Fall, much of my artwork back then became increasingly scabrous", Van Der Lingen explains. "In today's internet-everywhere info-bloated world, it's hard to really appreciate the very real 'shock of the new' which my friends and I experienced upon first encountering The Fall's early record sleeve designs in 1979–80."

These posters were put up all over the city, including in music shop windows, by members of both of the bands. The EMI store was one of The Haemogoblins favourite places to display posters, and was, according to them, "the coolest LP shop in town."



*Lie Dream of a Casino Soul*  
The Fall, 1981  
Designed by Savage Pencil

1. Interview via email with Lorenzo Van Der Lingen on the 13th March 2016.

# Poster\_0067

CAROLINE RIGBY

**Title:**  
The Chance.  
**Designer:**  
Unknown  
**Venue:**  
Star & Garter  
**Physical Description:**  
A4 single-sided poster



This particular poster has been somewhat of a mystery. It advertises a band, or possibly just a gig titled 'The Chance'. So far we haven't been able to find anyone who remembers a band with this name. We do know that this gig showcased Roy Montgomery under his country alter-ego, 'Laughing Crow', and was held at the Star and Garter. The "A Suzanne Says Design" sign-off was probably a reference to Montgomery's other band The Shallows, who released a song titled 'Suzanne Said'; the actual designer is not attributed, but was likely to be a friend or band member as was common. Roy Montgomery, also lead singer of The Pin Group, was highly influential in the Christchurch music scene of the 1980s. Aside from playing in bands, he also managed the EMI shop on Colombo Street. Montgomery has been referred to as "an essential cog in the city's cool",<sup>1</sup> and has also become a 'low-fi' legend in the USA.

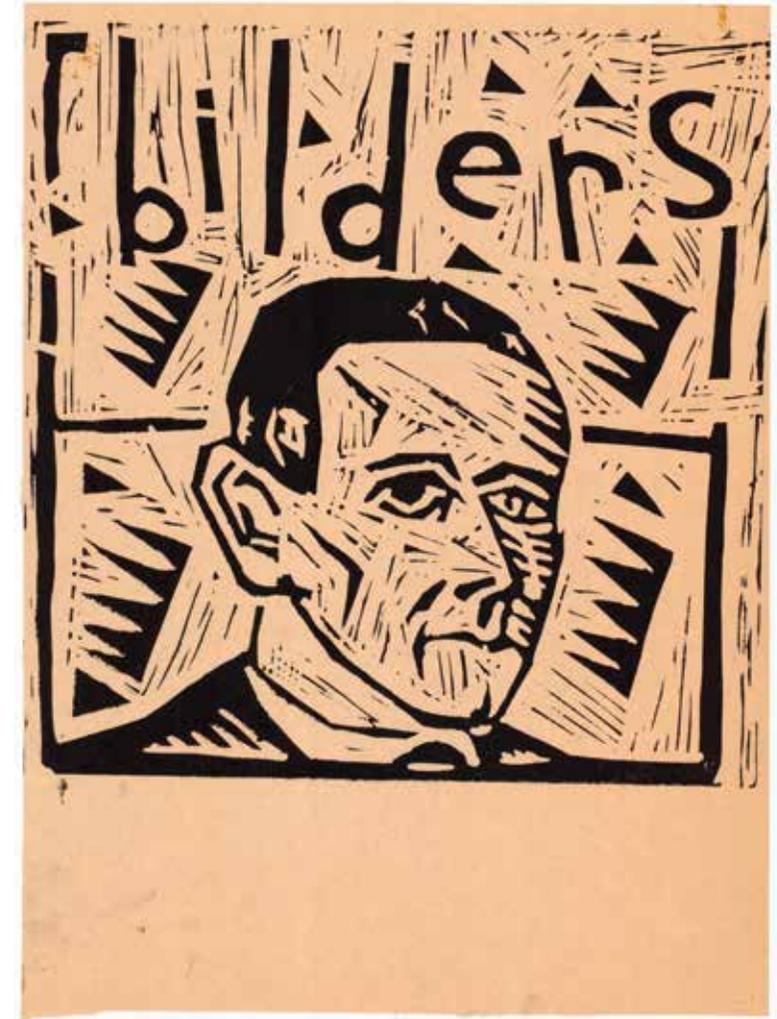
The poster is hand-drawn, unpretentious, messy, loud and imperfect. It constructs a dilettante/underground/anti-mainstream/DIY message. The materials include watercolour and pen/ink on discoloured paper. The handwriting is shaky and skewed, uneven, and at times

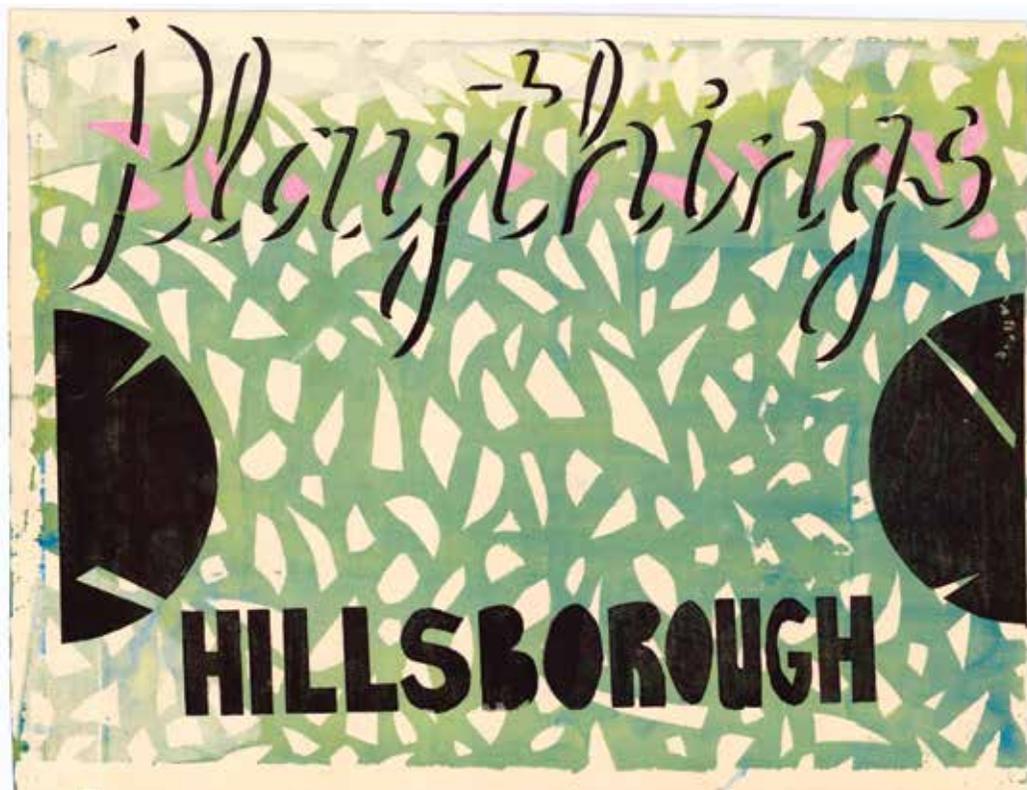
1. David Swift, 'Christchurch in the 80s', *The Big City* website, 2011. Retrieved from <http://thebigcity.co.nz/interview/Christchurch-in-the-80s>

indiscernible. Arguably, conventional techniques and formal rules of design are challenged, like balance of positive/negative space, or hierarchy of image. The text runs as a sort of stream of consciousness. A rhetoric monologue referencing other bands and venues circles the sides of the centre penrose-esque triangle, which structures the otherwise claustrophobic and chaotic composition, which is then split into smaller triangles, each a section of information. The triangle is often seen as a reference to the mind—or in this case, the inebriated mind—as the poster instructs; “Come and join the drugs”. Other small images emerge including a planet and star, a question mark, and splashes of blue and red ink alongside a moonflower-looking object in the style of Ralph Steadman.

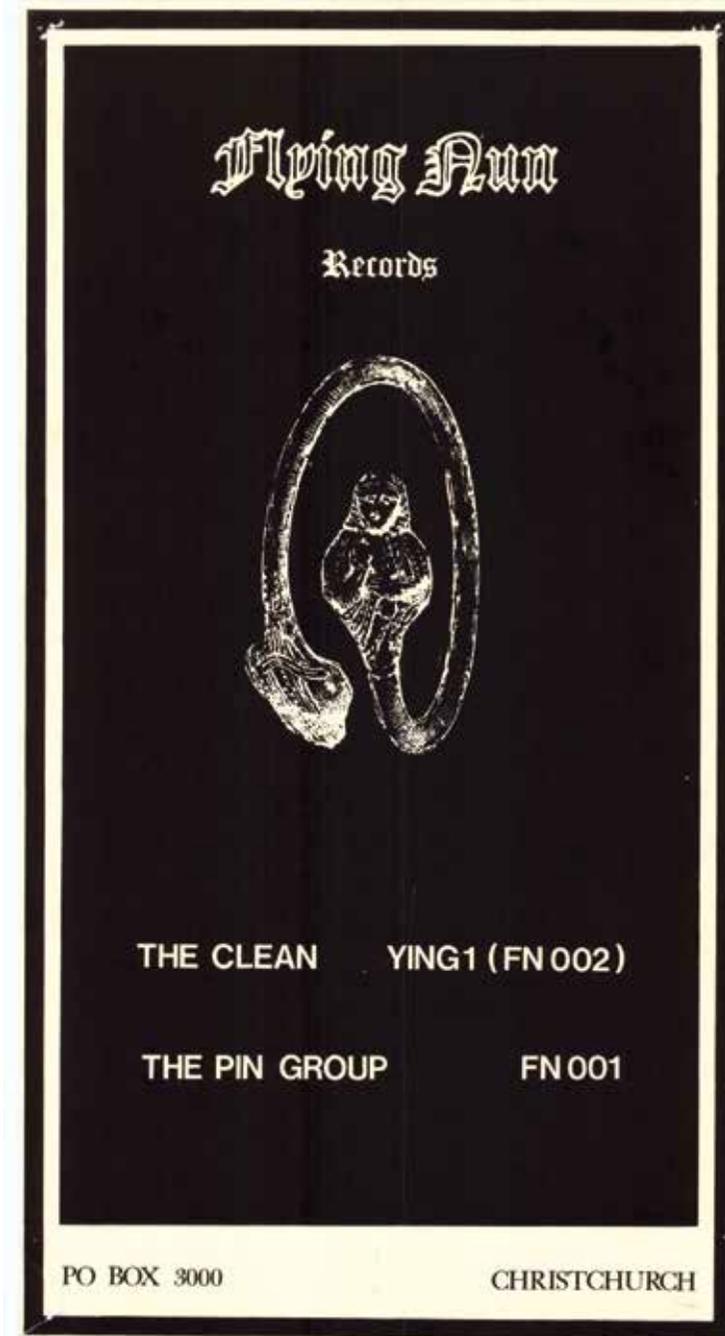
An interesting aspect of this poster in particular is the list of references to other local and international bands and venues—“the Velvets at the Vulcan Gas Co. gig, the Doors at the Whisky...”. This set of precedents works to articulate a history, an ethos, and a potential community—a particular niche for esoteric music in a conservative setting. It clearly dictates a set of irreverent rock ‘n’ roll/punk commandments; “drink too much and knock drinks over, fall down, fume, argue, spew in the bogs, pass out”, and “how much can the metabolism tolerate?”

The Star and Garter, a.k.a. ‘The Slut and Gut’, was a hotspot for these types of gigs in Christchurch in the 1980s, alongside other institutions such as the Gladstone, the Malthouse, the Hillsborough, the Aranui Tavern and Mollett Street. The Star and Garter at 332 Oxford Terrace was demolished in 2016 as a result of damage caused by the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes.<sup>2</sup> It is currently a vacant lot.

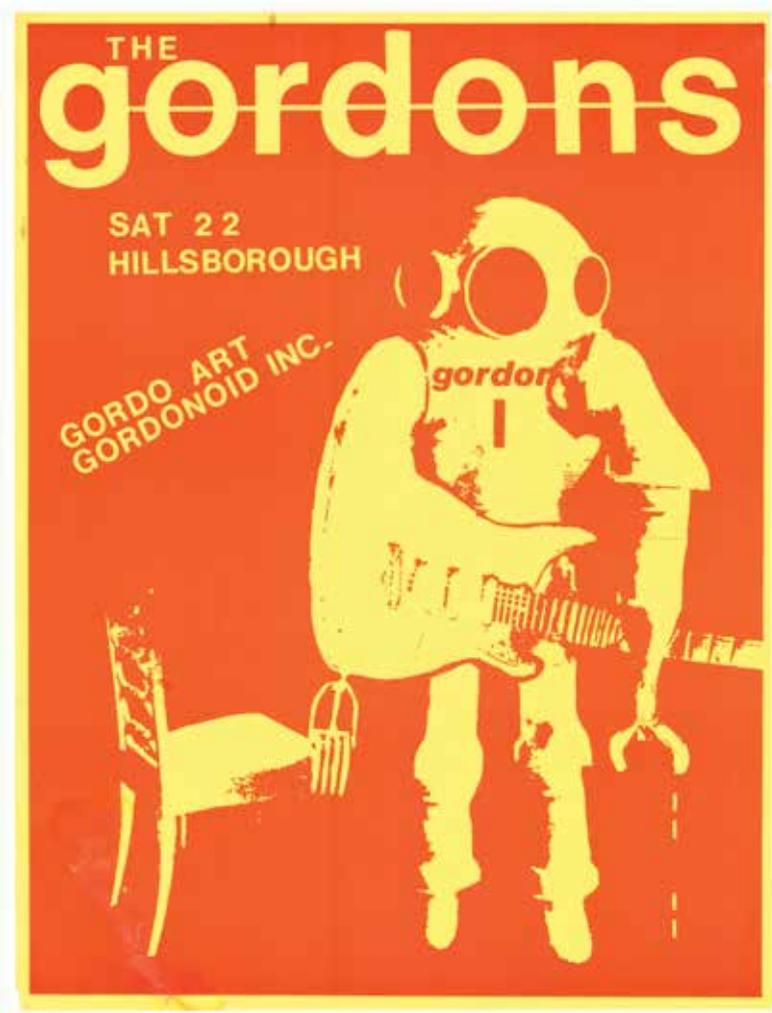




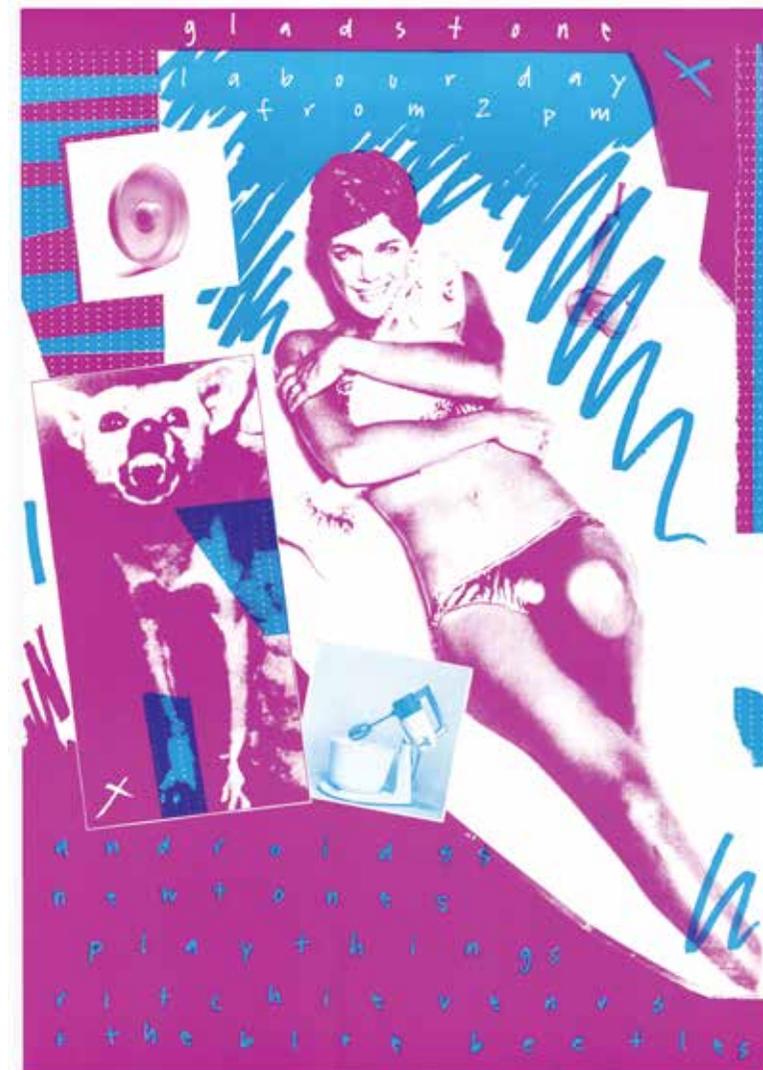
Original size: A3  
See page 11



Original size: Long A3  
See page 13



Original size: A2  
See page 15



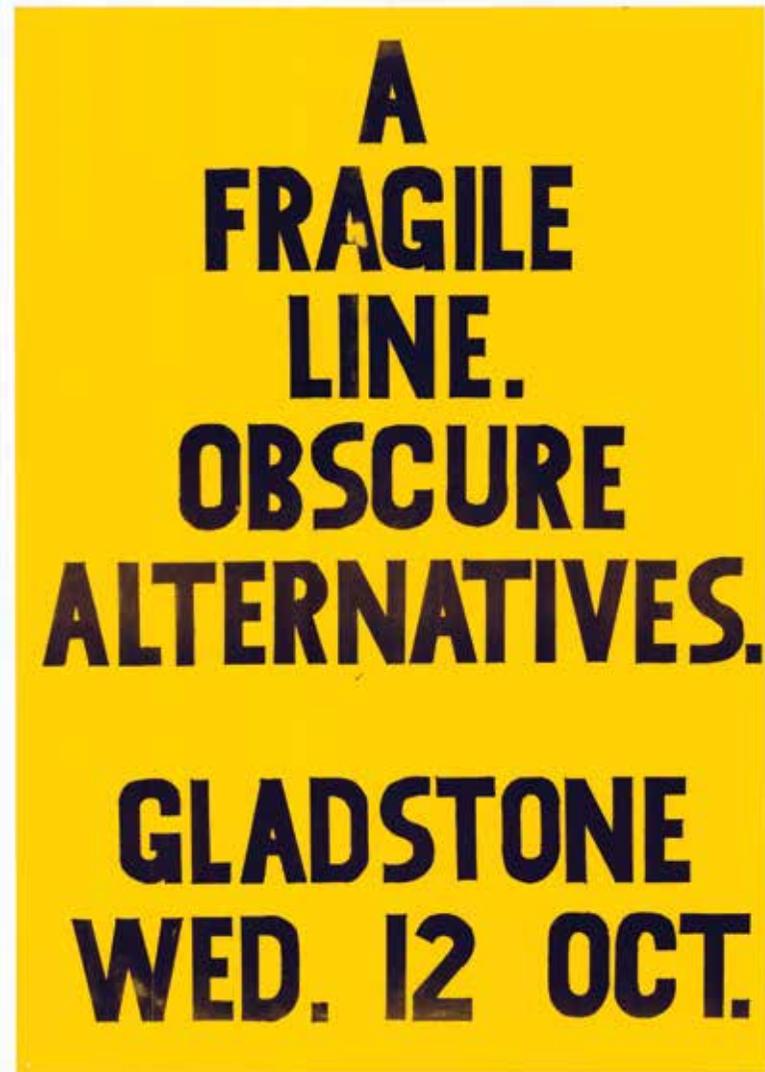
Original size: A1  
See page 17



Original size: A4  
See page 19



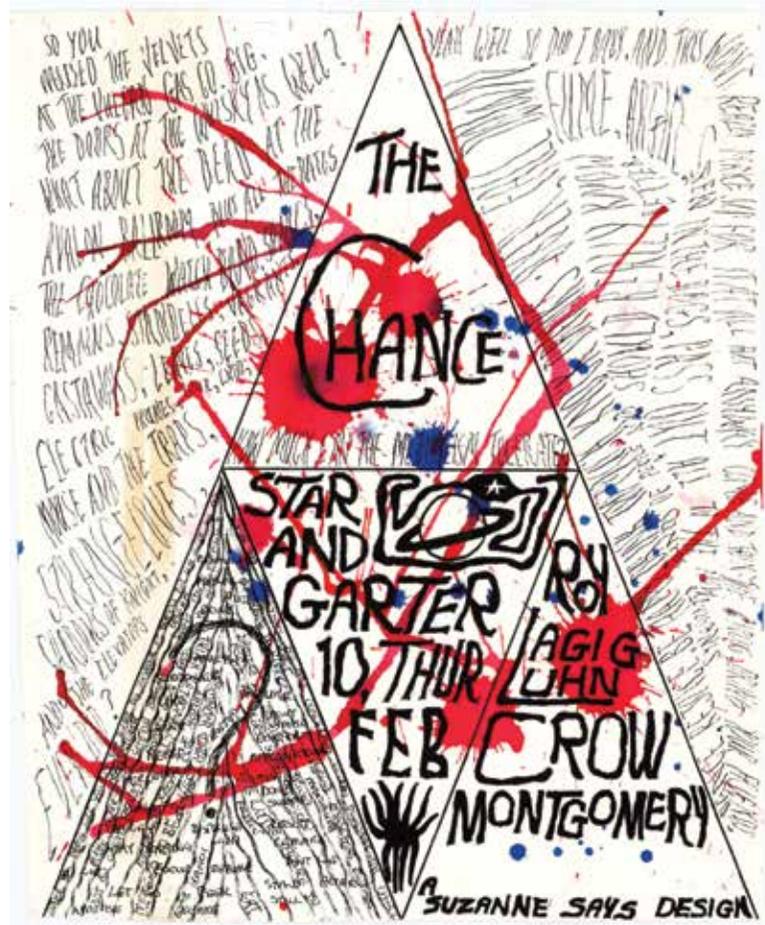
Original size: A3  
See page 21



Original size: A3  
See page 23



Original size: A3  
See page 25



RYAN PATRICK

# Poster Wars

There was a time when renegade postering was a rite of passage for bands and other artistic dilettantes trying to make a name for themselves, or at least just get a few punters along to their shows. Of course there are still a few—very few—out there with a bucket of paste keeping the spirit alive in the middle of the night, but the city-scape has most definitely changed as now decade-old deals with city councils around New Zealand have long sealed up the majority of the walls and bollards in exclusive deals with national billsticker barons, Phantom. Phantom Billstickers actually emerged from these golden days themselves. In fact the company was born out of a desire to make things easier for the little guy; ‘get a sleep in, we’ll put those posters up for you.’ Of course getting Phantom to do it for you also meant you weren’t the one inside the crosshairs if any sort of official caught the posters getting put up where they weren’t supposed to be.

In the wee small hours of cold Christchurch nights in the early 1980s, amongst the buckets of wallpaper glue and makeshift collection of local band posters, Phantom founder Jim Wilson saw an opportunity to ‘legitimise’ what, up until that point, was something akin to guerrilla

warfare. Putting up posters for your band wasn't exactly the most comfortable of experiences. You'd have to do it after midnight when there were less people around to ask probing questions about what the hell you were up to. Importantly absent at these hours were those who may have happened to own the building you were pasting your punk band's poster up on. Luckily, most respectable business owners were in bed by 11pm. But then, by the next day, all your hard work may well have been pasted over by someone else. You had to be strategic, out-postering later and later. You wanted your posters to be the last to go up, so you could get the prime spots. You could either post up on walls already full of soggy paper and paste, or try to 'break' a new space yourself. Walls of abandoned buildings and large unheralded spaces could be turned into great poster spots. If you came back the next morning and your posters were torn down, you could either move onto another less protected patch, or try and try again until the sheer amount of paper and paste broke the spirit of whomever owned the bit of real estate. Once a wall was broken, turned into a real 'spot', all bets were off and soon enough the paper would be centimetres thick.

In the later 1980s small companies like Phantom and Sticky Fingers were the most visible organised groups doing the less than legal legwork on those late nights, earning the ire of those looking to keep the city at large 'respectable' and 'clean'. As a small independent band you could still go out yourself and put your posters up, but, in Christchurch especially, Phantom was large enough and efficient enough that theirs were the only posters that could really be counted on being on top of the pile most mornings. Love them or loathe them the Phantom crew got it done, and soon enough—being the most obvious culprits when it came to the unwanted plastering of walls—Phantom came to the attention of the Christchurch City Council.

Wilson sold Phantom in 1985 then rebought the business in 1992 to find that councils were cracking down harder than ever. They attempted on many occasions to somehow 'legitimise' the postering process in a way that would leave the walls of the city in a more organised

state. Through a lot of eager lobbying, and possibly thanks to relationships built during his time out on the streets in Christchurch in the early '80s, Wilson and Phantom finally started landing the type of deals they'd been hanging out for, and, by signing contracts with various councils throughout the '90s, gained legal control over most of the city's bollards and poster walls. This way Phantom could run a legitimate business without the negative attention of the council, and in return they would keep their product, and hence the streets, neat and tidy. This meant that Phantom now had the authority to pull down unofficial posters in the name of tidiness, profit protection, and—in fact—the law.

Within the world of postering, there are a couple of unwritten but oft adhered to 'rules'. Check the date—if a poster's event hasn't happened yet then you don't paste over it. Similarly, leave the wall art alone (although this brings up its own set of problems as one person's art may appear as simple graffiti to others). However, now that the majority of the city's bollards and poster walls fall under Phantom's jurisdiction, independent posterers are all but extinct. There has always been a bit of rivalry when it came to the poster game; those unwritten rules were often ignored to a certain degree. Many people fondly remember when the streets were more of a level playing field that generated a vibrant, if sometimes messy, visual landscape. The city councils with their by-laws and exclusive contracts have changed this completely, and where there were once home-made A3 photocopied posters promoting local independent bands, there now tends to be large-format commercially printed corporate advertising.

Phantom Billstickers now employs around 50 people nationwide with council contracts in all the big cities as well as many of the small. In Wellington alone, the city with probably the highest density of foot traffic, making posters a highly viable advertising commodity, Phantom operates over 200 spots.<sup>1</sup>

Given the collection of posters we've been looking at in this archive I couldn't help but wonder how many of the posters put up each week these days are for up and

1. Interestingly independent, or illegal, postering still happens in Wellington, and—to a lesser extent—in Auckland. In Christchurch, especially post-quake, there is very little evidence of it happening at all.

coming local bands? Probably not many from what I have seen around town lately. Phantom does offer a first-time deal for unsigned bands of either 20% off placement or 25 free A3 posters, whichever is of greater value. Also most council contracts require that at least 10% of the posters they put up be for non-profit community projects/charities. When audited to confirm these statistics, it often comes back that closer to 20–30% are going towards these types of clients.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the contemporary equivalents of the punk rock poster pioneers of the late '70s early '80s are now looking at and utilising alternatives to the physical poster form. Jim Wilson himself says that it used to be that a lot of bands would have a poster before they had a demo tape.<sup>3</sup> It was all about being part of the scene and getting your band's name out there. Now it is more likely that most bands have a Facebook page before they've laid down any tracks. It's a new digital age that Phantom seems unenthusiastic about entering. Wilson told me "Facebook (and the internet) cannot possibly compete with a poster in the streets that really describes what one is likely to find at the gig."<sup>4</sup> Most bands still enjoy creating visual representations to accompany their audio outputs and demarcate their very own space of cultural relevance, however clearly much of this is now happening online. It's free and easy to create a Facebook 'event' for a gig and to simply put up a digital jpeg 'poster' there. Your 'friends' are probably more likely to see your picture there than on the street (especially in Christchurch as it is right now). It's hard to argue against the Facebook event page as being one of the most effective ways to get people to your gig.

The impulse and the intention are the same, in many ways, even though the format itself is evolving through digital formats. Bands still want to do it themselves, they still want to do it cheap, and they want to have creative control. But after the gig is over and when Facebook has been superseded by the next revolution in social networking, where will these digital 'posters' be then?

2. In Wellington, at least, Phantom must make quarterly progress reports to the council, which audits Phantom's services once a year.

3. Jim Wilson, interviewed via email 10th March 2016.

4. Ibid.

RYAN PATRICK

# The Gladstone

Loud, dirty, dangerous and a rollicking good time; the DB Gladstone Hotel was many many things but there's one thing it wasn't, and that's boring. During a relatively short period in the late 1970s and early '80s the Gladstone became synonymous with a new type of rudimentary yet infectious music that was developing a following throughout New Zealand. Punk, post-punk, the jangly so-called 'Dunedin sound' and some of the loudest shit you've never heard. In this period that's what the Gladstone was about. And much like the Stage Door in the 1960s<sup>1</sup> the Gladstone is now infamously and eternally attached at the hip to a significant moment in New Zealand's musical history.

The Gladstone started life in 1856 surely with little more intent than to rent out a couple rooms and sell a few pints, but when Dominion Breweries bought the place about 100 years later something quite different got added to the mix. Live music. Regular patrons could still get their jugs in on the weeknights but, soon enough, the weekends belonged to the young and the restless and their damned music. Situated in Christchurch on the corner of Peterborough and Durham Streets, it was

1. The Stage Door was a basement bar/club in Hereford Lane, Christchurch, infamous as a venue for wild long-haired teenagers and loud rock 'n' roll bands like Chants R&B.

your typical corner pub for your average Kiwi pint-sinker. However, thanks to the length of the bar-room, the low-rise stage at one end, and the dark, sweltering climate especially when packed with a dangerous yet amplifying amount of revellers—the old pub unwittingly became the perfect setting for a new rock ‘n’ roll revolution. The sodden carpet is said to have contained its own ecosystem and there was at least one occasion where a screwdriver had to be jammed into a fuse box to keep the power on long enough to finish a gig. But despite, or possibly even because of its health-and-safety failings, the place would boast some of the most loyal and passionate music lovers in town.

Over this period under the guidance of several promoters—such as Jim Wilson, Laura Mitchell and Rose Stapleton, along with Brian Gibson, Al Park, John Harrington and publican Ray Newman—the Gladstone not only satisfied a growing demand for live music by booking already well-known bands from the ‘big’ cities, but was actually pivotal in fostering the local music scene to the point where Christchurch bands were developing bigger and more committed audiences than their travelling counterparts. The weekend scene was soon accompanied by gigs on almost every night of the week. Monday through Thursday would be for the young upstarts, who often only had a couple of practice sessions in suburban Christchurch garages under their belts, while Friday and Saturday were mostly still reserved for the tourists. Of course the exception to this weekend rule would be when local heroes, such as The Gordons or Androids, would return to their hometown for gigs that would outstrip those of many supposed ‘bigger’ bands in terms of crowd numbers and sheer passion. Frequent ‘Battle of the Bands’ nights, the sharing of equipment and simply the somewhat isolated nature of Christchurch would go a long way to creating an environment in which bands shared members, and camaraderie was more common than rivalry. The Gladstone transcended the ‘scene’ and truly became a community with many regulars recalling that they essentially lived there when it was at its peak.<sup>2</sup> It was a supportive community too; getting to share in the spoils of local success was all part of the fun. You went to watch

2. To help collect first person information for this article a facebook page ‘Gladstone memories’ was set-up for past patrons to share their, in some cases, hazy recollections of the famous pub.

your mates play and if you weren’t in the crowd it’s probably because you were on the stage instead.

By 1980 everyone knew everyone and, as some former patrons recall, your drinks were ready waiting for you at the bar as you stepped over the venue’s hallowed threshold. This was the turf where The Gordon’s hauled in the massive sound system from a Motorhead gig at the town hall a week earlier to destroy the eardrums of anyone in a ten mile radius. If you didn’t know about The Gladstone clearly you just weren’t listening very hard. Despite its high-volume raucous attitude however, it could be said that The Gladstone and its eager revellers cultivated a certain feeling of the pub being a bit of an illicit local secret. Many who shared memories of ‘The Glad’ even tell of Newman having a secret knock to get back inside after-hours if there were no good parties at someone’s flat after the gig that night. That would be a rare occasion however, as almost every gig’s final song would signal time for all your mates to head off to someone’s house for the rest of the evening to continue the frivolities. Not much other option when the city would be all but dead by midnight.

To give the Gladstone some context; bars would usually be closed by 11pm, there were two TV channels that went off-air around the same time, and frankly there wasn’t much to do at night. And so the Gladstone became an outlet for all the built up energy, angst, hormones and musical talent bursting at the seams of Christchurch. Not that the ‘Garden City’ was devoid of good venues when the Gladly took its rightful place as top dog. Mollett St<sup>3</sup> really kicked things off, but closed in 1978 paving the way for the Gladstone to become a home for the new punk scene that was already beginning to form there. Where Mollett St ploughed the soil, the Gladstone planted the seed. Then there was the Star and Garter, The Old Star, Cave Rock, and the Hillsborough Tavern too which catered to a larger upmarket audience and bigger gigs, but people still talk about how it lacked the soul of the bar known as the ‘Happy Brick’. Plenty more pubs and halls about the city hosted live music but most places lacked the cool factor, employing resident ‘covers bands’ rather than bands playing original music.

3. The Mollett St venue, originally a craft market space run by a hippie collective, morphed from a practice space for a band into a fully fledged underground punk sanctuary after they recognised the demand and potential for such a venue.

In contrast the Gladstone encouraged the playing of original music, and even if a band played some covers, they'd try to chuck in just as many originals.

There were attempts to document what was happening there. Laura Mitchell and Rose Stapleton nearly got a Gladstone compilation off the ground, featuring the more well-known bands who called the 'Happy Brick' home. But the reality is that, with quite often six bands a week, a lot of the bands who featured at the now legendary venue went unrecorded.

A change of booking policy around 1982 led to the slow unravelling of the Gladstone's strong reputation. There were still many golden nights to be had, but there was also the growing amount of police attention, largely due to skinhead/boot-boys at the punk gigs. This may have been fun at first—those underage drinkers would either be hidden behind the bar or would jump out a back window and over the fence when the bobby hats were seen entering the crowd—but eventually it became hard to justify booking bands again after their fans had trashed the bathrooms a couple of weeks prior. Over time, the much loved Ray Newman left, and a resident band The Cowboys, followed by Fat Sally, were introduced. Pokies began creeping in, and finally the Gladly lost its sense of cool. It was over almost as fast as it had begun. But for those who were lucky enough to experience the DB Gladstone in all its glory, memories are seared into their brains forever. You never forget home.

EMMA KEVERN

# Flying Nun

Flying Nun is one of the longest running and most influential independent record labels to come out of New Zealand. Hailing from Christchurch it was established in 1981 as a direct result of the emerging post-punk scene in the city. Flying Nun kicked off amongst other similar efforts in New Zealand at the time—labels like Ripper Records (1979–83), an independent label established by Bryan Staff, releasing the influential compilation AK79, while also signing popular local bands like The Swingers. Propeller Records also began in Auckland at around the same time, 1980, the brain-child of Simon Grigg. Propeller had success with bands like The Screaming Mee Mees and Blam Blam Blam, but closed down in 1983 for financial reasons.<sup>1</sup> Flying Nun however, having survived various major changes—being bought and sold and bought back again—is still around today.

It all started when a young man called Roger Shepherd got a job at The Record Factory on Colombo Street in Christchurch, while still in high school. Moving on to become a university student he enjoyed the burgeoning music scene, going to see local bands playing their own music. Bands like The Gordons and Bill Direen, as well

1. Simon Grigg cites the cost of producing albums, as opposed to singles, at the time as the biggest financial problem facing a small independent label. Propeller was revived in 2003 for two compilations — *Give it a Whirl*, and *Bigger Than Both of Us* — and also purchased the rights to the Ripper Records catalogue in 2014. [www.simongrigg.info](http://www.simongrigg.info)

as other bands that would come to town from Auckland or Dunedin as well. Shepherd thought that there were great bands in the South Island who were developing unique sounds, but since there were no South Island based record labels to record and/or support these bands, their talent was going to waste. It occurred to Shepherd that perhaps he could document some of this great music and maybe sell enough records for it to be a self-funding sort of thing.

In an interview with journalist David Swift for *The Press* in 1981, Shepherd laid out his plans for Flying Nun.<sup>2</sup> Swift wrote that Shepherd had formed a label “on the spur of the moment”. Although, “Flying Nun is a serious venture, Roger spent \$250 getting the name registered and the label legally set up.” It was obvious that a small start-up company like this was not going to be a competitive major label, which was never the goal for Shepherd anyway. As with influential renegade independent UK label, Rough Trade, making money was not the point. “There is no way that you can make money from singles in New Zealand”, said Shepherd.<sup>3</sup>

Flying Nun set out to provide the cost of recording and to arrange artwork for the bands. In terms of distribution; “We will write to record shops we think would be interested in our records, ask them how many copies they want, and send them”.<sup>4</sup> Shepherd knew, from working in record stores himself, that this would be a big help to bands who generally regarded the process of making, and then distributing a record, as an administrative hassle.

It was apparent from the start that Flying Nun was about having some fun and doing the right thing by the bands—making the musicians and their music the priority. In terms of which bands the fledgling label might release, Shepherd would base his decisions on the bands he would see every weekend playing at venues around the city. His approach to bands was very relaxed and informal. Robert Scott from The Clean said; “Roger had seen us a few times in Dunedin and Christchurch and after one gig at the Gladstone he just came up and said do you want to put a single out?”<sup>5</sup> The first two bands he signed were The Clean and The Pin Group. Two very

2. David Swift, ‘The Band and Flying Nun’, *The Press*, Thursday, July 2nd, 1981.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. From a brief interview with Robert Scott on 13th March 2016.

different sounding bands that, released together, indicated a mandate for diversity.

Not having access to the expensive resources of the major labels meant Flying Nun’s bands were generally recorded with primitive equipment—commonly a portable four-track tape recorder belonging to Chris Knox, who recorded most of the label’s early singles. Rather than a hinderance, this recording process was generally embraced and seen as something to be celebrated. Flying Nun records didn’t sound like those from the major labels, and the bands mostly enjoyed the freedom to record, and to sound the way they wanted to.<sup>6</sup>

While this ‘lo-fi’ sound came to define the label, Roy Montgomery of The Pin Group, was apparently devastated when he received their first seven-inch (FN001) fresh from the pressing plant that EMI owned in Wellington. He felt the sound quality had been lost when it had been transferred to vinyl. There was, however, so much local demand for it at the EMI shop where Montgomery was working, that he had to stock it. Flying Nun also had to distribute it to other stores as well, to attempt to cover the costs of production, although Montgomery believed the pressing to be so bad that he didn’t want it to be sent anywhere. According to David Swift, Montgomery kept “several boxes of the single under his bed”, he was so reluctant for it to be distributed.<sup>7</sup> More than 30 years later however, these singles can sell for up to seven hundred dollars.

While the label released a broad range of different sounding and innovative musicians, their posters and advertising displayed a similar sense of diversity and inventiveness. There was no real attempt at a one-design-fits-all approach—to have done so would have been seen as ‘too major label’. Flying Nun’s very first poster for singles by The Clean and The Pin Group was actually intended to be a possible visual template, or ‘identity’, for the developing label. But the very next poster was a two-sided collage with multiple people contributing odd bits and pieces—images and artwork from various bands like The Clean, The Chills, The Stones, Verlaines, and the Tall Dwarfs, as well as the first ‘designer’ of Flying Nun, Paul Smith (designer of the first Flying Nun poster seen on

6. Some bands, like the Sneaky Feelings, didn’t share Chris Knox’s enthusiasm for the lo-fi approach.

7. Interview with David Swift via email on the 22nd of March 2016.

page 31). This more playful mix-and-match, DIY collage approach became a defining factor in the future of the label's visual identity.

From humble beginnings in Christchurch, Flying Nun has gone on to become a somewhat legendary record label internationally, generating a world-wide audience for New Zealand music that sits outside of popular/mainstream taste.

# Below The Surface

CAROLINE RIGBY



*Silver Police* by Stuart Page, 1981. Photograph showing riot police and protestors during the 1981 Springbok Tour.

1. In South Africa 'apartheid' laws had segregated society based on race and ethnicity since 1948. The rights and movements of the majority—native coloured inhabitants and other ethnic groups—were curtailed, while the minority rule of the white European colonists was maintained.

Christchurch in the early 1980s was in the midst of a period of socio-political friction, reflecting broader nationwide unrest. The heavily regulated economy was in turmoil and controversial conservative Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, was almost overthrown by his own party. Broader political issues blew up on the streets during the South African 'Springbok' rugby team's tour of New Zealand in 1981, when anti-apartheid<sup>1</sup> protests divided the country as one of the nation's most popular sports became a political target.

In 1977 Steve Biko, a native South African anti-apartheid activist, had been killed by police while in custody. News of this spread around the world and the oppressive politics of the South African government became well known internationally. As a result, when the Springbok rugby team came to play in New Zealand in 1981, peaceful protests were organised by groups who felt that New Zealand should boycott sporting events with South Africa. Groups like HART (Halt All Racist Tours) and MOST (Mobilization: Stop The Tour) organised large-scale campaigns involving petitions, flyers, and rallies. As the government continually ignored these protests,



'Impeach Muldoon' poster  
Stuart Page, 1981

their actions intensified to interrupt and even stop some games from happening altogether. This resulted in huge marches and the take-over of sports grounds. At the Christchurch game on 15th August the field was invaded by a number of protestors, but they were quickly, and forcibly, removed by security staff and spectators, while protestors outside the stadium occupied the streets and confronted riot police.

During early stages of the tour these actions had proven successful, but police forces grew rapidly in response. Police tactics were controversial as they increasingly used force to deal with protestors. As well as arming themselves with long-batons and riot gear, the police also enlisted the help of the armed forces to prevent the trespassing of games. Protestors then took to wearing motorcycle helmets to protect themselves, and the whole thing began to look a lot like the beginnings of a full-scale civil war. These events divided the country; not only pitting the police against public, but also protestors against rugby supporters—of whom there were many, and who felt that sports and politics should be separate things.<sup>2</sup>

Economic recession, growing inflation and unemployment had been affecting New Zealand since the mid 1970s. Robert Muldoon's unpopular wage and price freeze of 1982, an attempt to prevent rampant inflation, was the most dramatic peacetime economic regulation in New Zealand history. Cuts to university funding by the Minister of Education—Merv Wellington, a fundamentalist conservative who banned sex and drug education in schools—resulted in organised protests around the country as well as amongst student populations at the university in Christchurch and out at Lincoln. It was argued that this policy would not only create more stress for the average student, but also increase the gap between the classes. The cut was compounded by the fact that jobs for students were becoming less available, and many students were therefore forced to turn to the state-sponsored employment schemes.

The failed 'Colonel's Coup' of 1980 contributed to a feeling of uncertainty towards the government, as

2. Interestingly, there had been a very different reaction to the Moscow Boycott only a year prior. Following the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the United States instigated a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. The New Zealand government applied strong pressure on sporting organisations here to do the same, and only four of the team attended. The New Zealand Olympians then disassociated themselves by marching with a black flag with a silver fern rather than the official flag of the nation.

an unsuccessful attempt to replace Robert Muldoon as leader of the National Party by younger Ministers. The coup was due to concerns that Muldoon had become too dictatorial in his position and Cabinet Minister Brian Talboys was considered as the best contender for the job. Talboys himself was hesitant as it was not clearly evident that a majority of the party supported the change. They didn't, and Muldoon remained Prime Minister until being overthrown by the Labour Party in 1984.<sup>3</sup>

Some musicians at the time wrote biting satirical songs in response to the country's solemn psyche, such as the Blam Blam Blam song 'There is no Depression in New Zealand' (1981). The Knobz's song 'Culture?' (1980) reflected on Muldoon's famous statement that pop music was not part of the New Zealand culture, introducing a 40% sales tax on pop music. Iconic New Zealand acts like The Herbs and The Topp Twins sang about other political issues such as keeping New Zealand nuclear-free.

Rob Stowell explains the musical response to the economic/political situation; "The psychic discharge of pent-up frustration and inchoate rage... The people making it were fed up with doing what was expected of them by a narrow-minded and conformity-mad society of people that presented as wowsers and drank like navvies."<sup>4</sup> Writer David Swift agrees, "it was incredible the passions that a local band playing original music inspired—one of the great legacies of punk."<sup>5</sup> Roy Montgomery, lead singer of influential Christchurch band The Pin Group, attributes the city's main musical influences at this time to a sense of cold scrutiny, lack of open acknowledgement of effort, and "a culture where dislocation and alienation of one sort or another are the norm."<sup>6</sup>

With deregulation from state control in the 1980s, there was a sudden increase in radio and television broadcasting.<sup>7</sup> RDU, a student-run radio station at the University of Canterbury was one of these. An advert in *Canta* (magazine of the university's Student Association) at the time stated; "If you get sick and tired of the same old throw away music that the local commercial radio stations feed up to you day in, day out, then tune into 1422."<sup>8</sup> First set up in 1976, RDU was renowned

3. The David Lange-led Labour Government that replaced Muldoon's National Party in 1984 made sweeping reforms introducing aggressive neoliberal economics which included the selling off of state assets. These moves ushered in the now seemingly normal corporatization of public space and life in general. Interestingly for us, this poster collection only goes up until 1984. Coincidence? Maybe?
4. Russell Brown, 'Friday Music: Christchurch, Legacy of Strange', *The Hard News*, 2015 [www.publicaccess.net/hardnews/Friday-music-christchurch-legacy-of-strange](http://www.publicaccess.net/hardnews/Friday-music-christchurch-legacy-of-strange). Retrieved 20/02/16.
5. David Swift, 'Christchurch in the 80s', *The Big City*, [www.thebigcity.co.nz/interview/Christchurch-in-the-80s](http://www.thebigcity.co.nz/interview/Christchurch-in-the-80s). Retrieved 25/02/16.
6. T. Mitchell cites Roy Montgomery 1997, *Flat City Sounds: A Cartography of the Christchurch Music Scene*, page 95.
7. B. Pauling, 'Radio - The rise of private radio, 1970s to 2010s', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 2014. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/radio/page-5>. Retrieved 30/03/16.
8. *Canta Magazine* 1983, Radio U Advertisement, p.16.

for supporting local bands and alternative music. Independent media channels like student radio were critical in terms of radical voices finding an audience, and universities were important sites for protests, organisation, and critical discourse.

The economic, political and social disarray of New Zealand in the 1980s resulted in varying forms of rebellion from protests to coups. Many turned to radio and music as means to unite and speak out against the perceived injustices of their time.

# Art School Connections

Art schools and music have a long and intertwined history. The Beatles, Pink Floyd, Talking Heads, Roxy Music, Pulp and many more all contained band members who attended schools of visual art. While some may not have graduated, musical celebrities from Keith Richards to Kanye West began their musical careers as art school drop-outs.

In the 1980s Christchurch had two art schools—the ‘Ilam’ School of Fine Arts (University of Canterbury) and Christchurch Polytechnic, or CPIT (recently rebranded as Ara). Researching this poster collection we seemed to keep coming across students and graduates from both these schools. Ross Humphries, bassist in The Pin Group, studied at the Ilam School of Fine Arts, where he met the young Ronnie van Hout, who then designed and printed their posters and record sleeves—and who himself started Into The Void with fellow art school students Jason Greig and Mark Whyte. John Halvorsen of legendary acts, The Gordons and Bailterspace, studied graphic design at the Christchurch Polytechnic, as did members of the bands Ballon D’Essai and The Haemoglobins. Stuart Page, drummer in Above

Ground and then The Axemen, studied photography at the university and went on to make many of Flying Nun's early music videos. Robin Neate studied sculpture at the university and went on to design posters for the Newtons. Robin teaches painting at the school now. There are bound to be more connections than we have uncovered here, but our research was framed—necessarily limited in its scope—by the particular posters we selected from the library's archive.

As art school students ourselves we were interested to talk to people who had studied at each of the two schools at the time. Ronnie van Hout studied Film at the Ilam School of Fine Arts from 1980–82, and Lorenzo van der Lingen studied Graphic Design at Christchurch Polytech from 1981–82. We thank them both for their responses to our questions...

## **RONNIE VAN HOUT INTERVIEWED BY EILISH CAMERON**

*As an artist you utilise many mediums, but what did you specialise in at art school, and, who were your lecturers?*

I specialised in Film, and my lecturers were Maurice Askew in my second year and Serwind Netzler in my final year. It was a diploma course then and only three years long.

*When you were at Ilam, what was the structure of the course like? Did you have freedom to explore disciplines/mediums or was that frowned upon?*

The course in those days was different. With Maurice Askew we learnt a great deal of film theory, but generally you had a number of projects to work on, and I don't remember much interaction with staff. I also think you were discouraged from any cross-disciplinary activity, which is what I was interested in doing. The atmosphere was pretty relaxed in the studios. You didn't see the staff very much, but you were expected to be there everyday. I roamed around, hanging out in the other areas of the school, because with film there was plenty of waiting involved.

*What kinds of music did you listen to as a student?*

I was one of the few students at school who was a punk, and went to see bands. I guess I listened to punk and

associated alternative music (although it wasn't called that). Old stuff like The Velvet Underground, The Stooges, The Beatles and Bob Dylan. The local music scene was also fantastic. There were many great bands playing every weekend in Christchurch. The Clean and The Pin Group were always a good double bill.

*Can you describe the connection between the art school and the music scene at the time?*

There wasn't a huge connection between the art school and the music scene. There was only a handful of students who were interested in music in my year group. I think the music scene was fairly independent of art schools, and I think this was true throughout New Zealand at the time. Laurence Aberhart, the photographer, who taught in my first year, he was into the contemporary music scene.

*Do you think the culture of Christchurch influenced your work during the 1980s?*

It probably did, but I felt like I was reacting to things, rejecting the culture of the city. Art school really threw that into my face. The mainstream offered me very little and was very unappealing, even art school seemed to be more of the same. In the music scene it was easy to identify as an outsider, and the bands and the audiences were close. It wasn't trying to connect to the mainstream. I think certain attitudes from that time have helped define my position on the world.

*A sense of humour seems to run through your work over the years and is evident in the posters you made back then. New Zealand's art history prior to the '80s seems all sort of dark, serious, and foreboding. Did you ever think of what you were doing as some sort of antidote to that?*

I didn't think I was the antidote, but I like the idea of art as a kind of poison that needs an antidote. Art students also took themselves very seriously. I tend to quickly go toward wit, as comedy was an influence along with horror and sci-fi. I identified with the failed, and rejected (the definition of Punk), so I wasn't very interested in the art world, apart from being a somewhat cynical observer, jeering from the sidelines.

*When did you start playing music? Is there a specific connection between your music and art making?*

I joined Into the Void in 1987. It was a band of artists, one of whom I was at Art school with, and we all shared an interest in making a racket. I am not convinced that

there is any conscious connection between my art and the music we make together as a group. In many ways the band was an 'antidote' to the solitary studio practice of the artist.

*Have you made any posters for bands since these?*

I made many posters for Flying Nun and associated bands, and other occasional things off and on since the Spock one. I screen printed record covers for a few bands, but I was kind of made redundant as more designers started making posters, and doing a 'better' job. I make the odd Into the Void poster, but if I have a super power it is definitely not being a designer.

## **LORENZO VAN DER LINGEN INTERVIEWED BY JANELLE SANSON**

*As an artist you utilise many mediums, but what did you specialise in at art school, and, who were your lecturers?*

I specialised in drawing implements wherever possible, as paint, brushes and I have never mixed well. So pencils and pens—Rotring technical pens and felt markers. Full-time lecturers were: Murray Hedwig (Graphic Design, Typography and Photography), Michael Reed (Printmaking, Illustration), Neil Dawson (3D Studies, Freehand Drawing), Graham Bennett (Figure Drawing, 3D Studies).

*When you were at CPIT, what was the structure of the course like? Did you have freedom to explore disciplines/mediums or was that frowned upon? Was it relaxed/casual, or was it very formal? What was the culture of the studio like?*

The structure was very formal and guided, especially in the first year. Exploring different media was encouraged for freehand drawing only. It became more relaxed in the second year, as I recall writing my own brief for screenprinting a six-page comic for both illustration and printmaking in the third term.

The culture of the studio was great, despite the huge workload—which we actually successfully rebelled against in the second year. This was due to CPIT trying to squeeze three years into a two-year course. We were an unusual class in that many of us were 'first-wave' punks and therefore were quite bolshy, so the whole class stood

united. Unlike previous years' intakes, who grumbled about the status quo but did little to change it.

*What kinds of music did you listen to as a student?*

Alternative music mostly, The Fall were hugely influential—with their crude DIY record artwork, as well as their music. Other favourites that dominated my turntable were David Bowie, Pere Ubu, Talking Heads, Iggy Pop, The Stooges, Captain Beefheart, The Cramps, The Monochrome Set, and Bob Dylan's proto-punk beatnik LP Highway 61 Revisited. I also enjoyed The Beatles and (secretly)

Abba—though the later was one I never dared admit to.

*What did you play in the Haemogoblins? And how did you end up making posters for them?*

I provided vocals. To call it 'singing' would be inaccurate, and I still prefer to describe it as 'shouting in tune'. Occasionally I played the odd percussion instrument, and purposely inept harmonica.

I made the posters because I wrote the lyrics I guess. Though the other three core members (Willy Stewart, Francis Salole and Cameron Chittock), and Matthew Campbell were all Polytech graduates and were quite capable of designing posters. Now that you mention it, it's a mystery why they didn't.

*Can you describe the connection between the art school and the music scene at the time?*

There wasn't much at the time, as we had little time for anything else during the two-year course. Although Lesley Maclean had possibly started designing and printing posters for The Clean and other Flying Nun bands. And I think Marcelle Lunam produced a poster for Desperate Measures—a 'boot boy' band which her then-boyfriend performed with. I had connections with Ballon D'essai as most of the band were friends. Matt Campbell—their bassist and later Haemogoblin—and I screenprinted the cover for their first EP after-hours at Polytech. I also chose Ballon D'essai as the subject of my first-year photojournalism project, which was really just a sneaky way to tour around with them and get into their gigs for free!

*When did you start playing music? Is there a specific connection between your music and art making?*

I learnt guitar for a couple of years when I was eleven,

but I've never enjoyed playing it much (it hurts my dainty fingers!). I also sang with school choirs, unbelievably! My 'rock star' years started when I joined Fat Hand in 1982, and then when I was later invited to help form The Haemogoblins in 1983 after we'd graduated.

Music and art have always gone hand-in-hand for me, ever since I became a huge David Bowie fan around the age of ten. He made me aware that it was possible to 'play dress-up' and reinvent yourself—something that punk and new wave also originally extolled, before both became sad parodies of themselves.

I became aware of the music/comicbook connection thanks to both Robert Crumb (his Big Brother and The Holding Company cover blew my tiny mind) and Joe Wylie (New Zealand's greatest 'lost' comics artist), whose work I discovered in Strips around the same age. Wylie's work is amazing, he also produced the brilliant animation for Toy Love's last single, Bride of Frankenstein.

*Do you think the culture of Christchurch influenced your work during the 1980s?*

I saw Christchurch as a terribly dull and grey place at the time, so not only did I feel it was my personal duty to dress as colourfully as possible but also to put on a show onstage. Rather than, you know, just bloody standing there! The early Flying Nun bands were the worst offenders, and I even walked out of the much-anticipated Christchurch debut of The Verlaines for this reason. The theatrical approach was viewed with suspicion by most of the 'alternative' crowd. In fact, our best gigs were mostly in places other than pubs, such as The Free Theatre, the Arts Centre, and the Zanzibar nightclub.

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[www.christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Posters/Music/Rock/1980-1989/thumbnails/](http://www.christchurchcitylibraries.com/Heritage/Posters/Music/Rock/1980-1989/thumbnails/)

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