


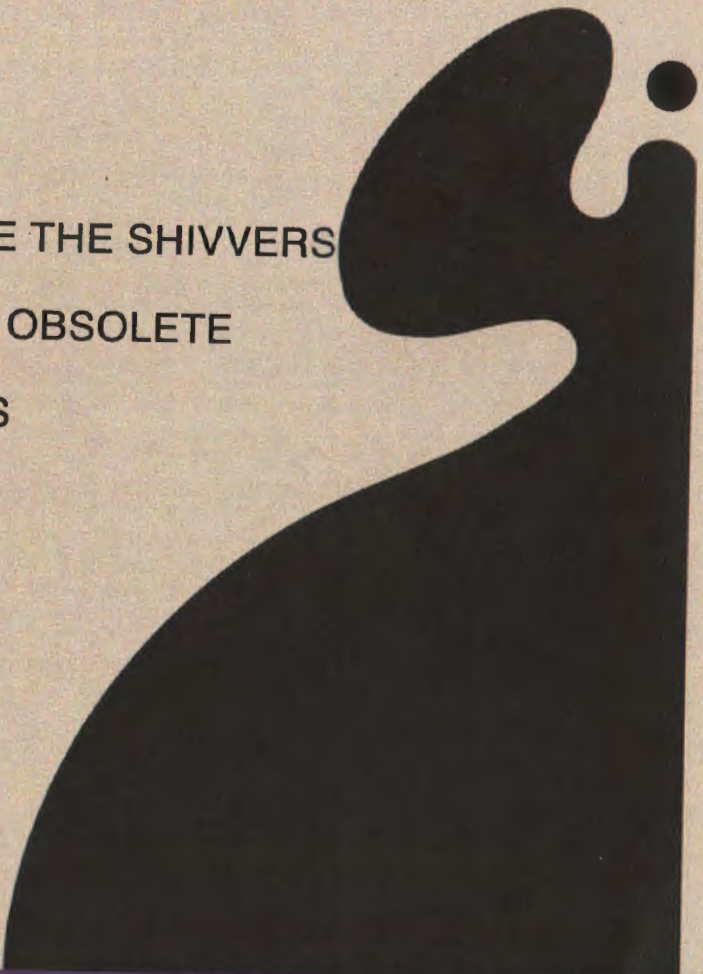
HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS

VOLUME 2

APRIL 2021



THE GARBAGE AND THE FLOWERS . LORELLE MEETS THE OBSOLETE . SESSA . AMI DANG . MARIO RADEV . SWEEPING PROMISES

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Highly Contagious is created on the stolen land of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin nation.

We would like to acknowledge elders past, present and emerging.

Sovereignty was never ceded.

We encourage all our readers to Pay the Rent. It is a moral obligation of all non-indigenous Australians to fully acknowledge the original custodians of the land on which we reside. White Australians reap the benefits of a nation that has accumulated wealth through the continual oppression and exploitation of indigenous peoples. It's time we stand together in solidarity and constructively use our privilege to support indigenous leaders. The cultural genocide of indigenous people is ongoing. Individuals can make a difference. Reconciliation begins with us.

It's important to note that Paying the Rent should not be considered a one payment or the only step in reconciliation, every day white Australians profit of the stolen land and everyday we should be reflecting on our privilege born from colonisation every day.

- www.paytherent.net.au - Donate a percentage of your weekly or monthly income (1 % of your income is recommended and achievable for many). If you're able, consider using the penalty rates gained from invasion day, queen's birthday and other colonial holidays to pay the rent.
- www.sistersinside.com.au - Sisters Inside are an organisation that strategically advocate for the collective interests of women in the criminal justice system, and provide services to address their more immediate needs.
- www.blackrainbow.org.au - Black Rainbow is an indigenous led, not-for-profit social enterprise supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQI+ communities.
- www.gofundme.com/f/black-deaths-in-custody - The NATSILS (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services) works to support the families affected, amplify their voices and together campaign for an end to black deaths in custody.
- www.justice.org.au/donate - National Justice Program is a non-government organisation which works towards a fairer justice system and more equitable society through court work, research, training and strategic advocacy.
- www.clothingthegap.com.au - Clothing the Gap is an Indigenous run clothing label based in Victoria, 100 percent of their profits go to actively supporting Aboriginal health promotion and education programs throughout Victoria.

These are just a few ways in which you can help, there are many more indigenous led initiatives and we urge every reader to go out and check out what's out there.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS

HELLO AND WELCOME to the second edition of Highly Contagious! Let us preface this by saying that we're so grateful to everyone who helped us with the first edition, whether by contributing content, helping us distribute copies, or just by supporting us, you've all been instrumental in getting Highly Contagious the legs it needs to continue sharing beautiful music and art from around the world with all of our readers and we could not be more thankful for the generous community surrounding us!

This edition focuses on the many different faces of psychedelia; the linear, un-formed journeys that artists like Ami Dang take us on, the free-formed, cacophonous creations of The Garbage and The Flowers, the smooth and sensual sounds of Sessa, the enveloping, thick, fluid motions of Lorelle Meets the Obsolete and the other worldly creeping characters of Mario Radev. Each of these artists complements each other in their views and opinions about music and art, the community they hold so strong and their shared values of what art means on a deeper, more spiritual level. Their conviction to create something different, to go against the grain of what is expected, provide us with different brands of psychedelia that truly transcend our world. Our 'Highly Contagious' record pick for this edition is Sweeping Promises, with a feature interview that we did just before the release of their brilliant album 'Hunger For a Way Out.'

In this edition you'll have the pleasure of reading an in-depth retrospective of The Garbage and The Flowers,

straight from the mouths of Yuri and Helen. The visionaries go deep in conversation about the musical culture of New Zealand and their unique journeys. You'll also find a telephone interview with the amazing Sessa, a Brazilian artist hailing from São Paulo who eloquently expresses his thoughts on the spiritual nature of music, and how it can inspire beauty in the day-to-day. Lorelle Meets the Obsolete from Mexico were kind enough to chat to us via email about the history of their band, and the importance of communities working together to bring each other up. Ami Dang touches on some of the work she has been involved in and her production processes, and Mario Radev – genius animator, illustrator, musician and teacher – has given us an inspiring interview about the deeper values of making work that is true to yourself, and not compromising on what others may expect of you.

We also have a contribution from Sonic Alchemy, a scent artist from Canberra who has concocted a potent potion to mimic the sounds of Ami Dang and Lorelle Meets the Obsolete's music; bring your nose close to these pages and breathe deep, 'Obsolete Chypre' will bring you closer to the music than you knew was possible.

Xan Coppinger has provided us with a special mix for this edition exploring African psychedelic music. The QR code below will take you to our Mixcloud, where you can listen to the mix and read a wonderful written piece outlining the history and geographic/political references that inform the music.

Those that are familiar with the works of Rowena Lloyd, Highly Contagious' illustrator and art director, will be pleased with the stack of illustrations throughout and the care and love that she puts into every one of her pieces. Kaitlyn Hickey has also provided us with a piece that you can find inside. Additionally, we're lucky enough to have two incredible graphic designers, Gabriella Brown and Harry Green, doing our layouts and design work.

Of course, littered throughout will be the writings of Fergus Sinclair, with a multitude of music write ups and reviews, as well as a contribution from Dean Kalb.

We are so lucky to have such a great artistic community around us, we never thought so many people would want to be involved and share their time and energy with us. This is a labour of love, not only for art and music but also for each other. I hope that you as the reader can feel the love in every page, and the appreciation that we give to you for supporting us and giving us the ability to continue. It's been a hard year for the music and creative community, but we will continue to contribute what we can to bring some joy during these trying times.

- Highly Contagious Team

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THE GARBAGE AND THE FLOWERS



The Garbage & the Flowers
Kansases Henrys Where is Lyon?

There was something magical in the waters in New Zealand in the late 70s and early 80s...

The fabled 'Dunedin Sound' cultivated by seminal bands such as The Clean, The Verlaines and The Bats paved the way for an exciting new era of indie and punk groups that would inspire generations to come, through one of our favourite record labels Flying Nun.

Though they came from Wellington on the North Island, Yuri Frusin and Helen Johnstone – the founding members of The Garbage and the Flowers – were not immune to the contagious music culture flowing out of Dunedin. An elusive band, they have very rarely released music or played. They are a semi-mythical group that managed to combine the most beautiful aspects of gentle and vulnerable songwriting with noxious, noisy free-formed cacophony.

Either unable or unwilling to rehearse, led by the punk-rock ethos 'enthusiasm is everything and method nothing' they would find themselves, in a very Velvet Underground-like manner, practicing, improvising, and rehearsing on stage. Not everyone took this the right way; sound engineers would often run on stage thinking something had broken when the band would dive into bouts of extreme feedback, punters would turn their noses and critics would share harsh reviews.

Their releases were few and far between, just a handful of tapes and LPs consisting of stoned live performances, demos and rehearsals. Perhaps their most notable and known work Eye's Rind as if Beggars is a collection of demos of live, mostly improvised songs, which demonstrates the ability of the band to move from Sister Ray-style jams to soft and subtle pop genius. Stoned Rehearsals, another brilliant collection of, well, stoned rehearsals, bridges the gap between the listener and the band by showing their conversations between songs, making you feel like you're sitting in the room with them. Their music can come off as unbearably harsh, but there is simultaneously something so inviting about it. Their songwriting and performing draws you into a world entirely of its own, one where you can freely express yourself, wail, scream, cry, dance and laugh. When artists put their vulnerabilities on their sleeves by playing simple and gentle music or by improvising in front of a crowd, it opens up a door into their hearts, and it enables the listener – whether in a live setting or their room – to feel free in their expressions and reactions to it. This would have been evident in their live performances, in which people would often join them on stage to dance and scream, getting invited because The Garbage and the Flowers thought it would be 'the wrong thing to do'. Thankfully for us, they have re-grouped and have their eyes on creating another album, as well as re-issuing Eyes Rind as if Beggars, so keep your ears peeled.

Yuri and Helen have been kind enough to give us in-depth answers to some questions over email, providing us with a valuable insight into the world of The Garbage and The Flowers.

Enjoy!

HC: Could you tell us a bit about your musical histories? Did the musical tastes gel immediately in your earlier bands together or did it develop over time? What were the bands like that predated The Garbage and the Flowers? Does anything you recorded around the time of The Sweet Nuthins still exist? If it does, do you think it would ever see the light of day?

YURI: When I met Helen, we were both in our last year of high school. She taught me how to skip school. I'd catch a bus out to Khandallah where she lived – high up in the mountain suburbs that surround Wellington – feeling sheepish in my school uniform. Helen would put her school uniform on and go out in the morning with her school bag and then wait in a side alley beside her house for her parents to go out to work. Then we'd meet up at her place and listen to records. We both liked The Velvet Underground, though I was more pro-active in searching out their records in the 'import bins' of the local record stores or UK mail order catalogues. I remember her playing me the early REM records, which I tolerated, and bits of classical music by composers like Bach that she liked. I probably played her a lot of New Order's Power, Corruption & Lies and other Joy Division stuff which I had been a big fan of going back a few years by then. Our musical taste was pretty similar, all the touchstones of indie music that we picked up listening to the local student radio station Radio Active and what we gleaned from copies of NME and Melody Maker which we'd scour in newsagents or libraries for the latest info. The Birthday Party, Roland S. Howard and Lydia Lunch's Some Velvet Morning EP, The Gobetweens' Cattle and Cane Helen loved especially, The Saints, British punk rock like Wire and a bit of Pistols, of course, Blondie, The Ramones and New York Dolls, The Stooges were huge, all the stuff that would soon be coined 'alternative music' by the press. On the weekends, when her parents were home, Helen would lock her bedroom door and we'd kiss while Sweet Jane blared on her stereo until her mother would come knocking on the door. For us, like a lot of other New Zealand teenagers at the time, Dunedin – a small town in the South Island – was as important a cultural centre as New York or anywhere. We were both serious acolytes of Flying Nun: The Chills' Pink Frost 7" (which was like a holy relic, you'd meet other kids from school on their way to and from buying it from the

record store on the day it came out), The Verlaines' Death and The Maiden, The Stones' EP, anything and everything by The Clean or The Great Unwashed, Chris Knox and The Tall Dwarfs, The Bats' first EP By Night, the incredible Other's Way/Anyone Else Would double A-side by The Doublehappies, the heavenly, guitar chiming first album Send You by Sneaky Feelings and The Rip's first EP In A Holy Place which was where Helen and I first encountered Alastair Galbraith. Alastair was the only Flying Nun rock star that we eventually got to know a little bit, he twisted the arm of Twisted Village to release our first 7" record in the USA.

HELEN: I think my younger brother got me into Radio Active. Andrew was more into fast punk like Flipper and Husker Du but we liked lots of the same things. I had heard the VU a few times, but didn't know it was them, I had an impression of this European romantic sinuously beautiful thing. (Probably Black Angel's Death Song). I didn't like them at first, it took a while to get with the microtones, but we did have pretty identical tastes, me and Yuri. I was more crazy about Bob Dylan than Yuri. I fell deeply for Bob – like no other.

Yuri gave me The Bangles' Going Down To Liverpool/ Dover Beach 7" for my birthday not long after we met. I was impressed by how they took the poem Dover Beach by Matthew Arnold and captured its lonely mood and tried to copy the curling style of Susanna Hoffs' singing. They were Big Star nerds too. I thought they were glamorous and wore the best clothes.

We would meet at Wellington Public Library, now an Art Gallery, on its long front lawns, which are described in beautiful prose by Jean Watson in The Balloon Watchers. Kids went there to study under the stairs and just hang out. It had alcoves and places to hide. You could thank the WPL librarians for some of the TGATF sound. We borrowed obscure tapes of Northern Indian Carnatic Music, Sufi Music, free jazz records. Libraries were a big part of the culture in Wellington. I used to listen to our 4-track record-ings for hours there, under the big soft headphones in one of the listening booths when I was planning our compilations. The equipment they had was high quality, and it was peaceful. There was a library in each small suburb of Wellington, linked by windy roads. There were more libraries than sports fields. We had a great local library in Khandallah in an art deco building and the small, intellectual Slavic librarian used to suggest books for me and try to deter me from reading Vogue. Now Google is our librarian and we have everything at our fingertips.

YURI: I'd started trying to put original songs together before I met Helen, thinking that I was following the one rule set by punk rock: enthusiasm is everything and method nothing. I've never had much patience with practicing music, so for me the only chance I had to play was to make up my own songs which I couldn't, by definition, stuff up. I remember my father getting really infuriated with me, coming down to my bedroom where I was bashing away on an acoustic guitar, grabbing it out of my hands so he could tune the strings. My father was no musician – though he had been forced by his mother as a young boy back in the USSR to learn to play the violin – but he taught me the important, singular lesson that you have to tune an instrument before you can actually play any chords on it properly. Or do you?

Helen had come from a different place, having had a lot of classical music training on the viola. When we met she was even in the National Youth Orchestra. But she was a bit lazy like me, too, I think, so sometimes she had to improvise her part in the orchestra.



HELEN: Yeah, it was especially Mahler and Wagner (so hard), I would mime some of the notes with my bow. Violists were in short supply, but somehow I got away with it because the parts for violas are usually hidden in the middle of the harmony in orchestral writing, at least up till the 20th century.

YURI: That she even managed to half get away with that demonstrates what an amazing musician she's always been. She can improvise with real soul and melodic richness, which is a rare quality. I think, in the improv field, which has a tendency to pomposity and suffers a bit from the 'Emperor's New Clothes' type syndrome. But, anyway, what she hadn't dared to try until she met me was to write a song, so when I played her some of my paltry attempts I was instantly showered with lavish praise which went a long way in giving me the confidence to carry on

with it. And then she was so good at finding the right harmonies to back up my simple musical ideas, and as she is quite the wordsmith herself we have ended up collaborating on a few pretty good tunes over the years. Cinnamon Sea, which is going to be our new mini-album I think contains some of our best work in terms of song-writing, so I really hope that it can be released soon.

We went through a few band names when it was just me and Helen: The Falling Spikes (which was what The Velvet Underground were first called), The McDaniel Sisters (a cross between The Brothers Gorgonzola and Bo Diddley's real name, Elias McDaniel), The Orange Orbs (with our friend Paul Williamson) and The Sweet Nuthins, among others. We put together a few tape albums for our own amusement including one called Ivory Girl by The Sweet Nuthins. I doubt

any of it will ever see the light of day, though there is one song that comes to mind – Don't Get Taken For A Ride which was written and played entirely by Helen – which would definitely be worth digging up one day.

HELEN: The Orange Orbs and Falling Spikes were jammy, The Sweet Nuthins did lots of ballads and had a music box feel. They did the arpeggio songs – Lisa, Counting Stars, Sandy Skies. The first bands sounded nice and the songs were good but there wasn't much chemistry till Paul came along, and the other members of TGATF Mk I. There was also a joke bluesman (Blind Boy Furry Johnson) and the Yahooody Manoochan Orchestra. Those guys never got round to recording anything, but had cassette art created for them.

We must have been serious because Yuri

real migraine generated fantasy
 every hip & jerk shock n roll rock n riot at yes musik up-tight
 real migraine generated fantasy
 every hip & jerk shock n roll rock n riot at yes musik up-tight



toxically yours...the legend lives on... THE PERFECT Brothers gorgonzola r.e.a.l. GROOVE

This is the real music

huh, groove

1986

World leaders speak
 out
"What We Need Most Is Rock 'N' Roll"



the time is now



AN EMPLOYEE of Wellington City Council's Summer City programme was dismissed on Monday night after he refused to turn down the sound system of a band performing on the main stage at the Dell.

Craig Burridge, 25, employed as sound technician under a project employment programme scheme, says he should not have been dismissed. He was to have worked three more months.

Wellington band The Brothers Gorgonzola were playing on the main stage at the Dell. The day's programme was running about 30 minutes late.

Mr Burridge said he was asked to turn down the band's public address system, but he refused. Sum-

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The only way we could get them to stop was to pull the plug on their sound. Mr Burridge refused to comply with repeated requests to do this he was given the sack.

"Monday night's episode was not an isolated case, he had plenty of warnings," Mr Burridge said.

His first came in late December when he failed to turn up for work, and was later found to have been working privately as a sound technician.

coming: 2 songs on hardege comp.
 chch/dunedin tour. new cassette
 video, single.

At toxoid products



did dish washing and bought a chic black Ibanez, and I saved up to buy (new) Old Pinky, another solid body, by cleaning in the uni holidays at the American Embassy in Thorndon. We were escorted around the desks by GIs, one called typically 'Joe', who was sleazy and called me 'Miss America'. Once I moved a piece of paper and he pulled his gun. I almost died for rock n' roll.

At uni, we took weird drugs at parties like Baxter's Lung Preserver, an ancient NZ liquid cough medicine that contained opiates immortalized in song by Anri Tist Ke on Ados Silicon Sealant. I had a swig and recall seeing a massive black serpent writhing across the walls at my first flat at Grove Rd. Its gleaming girth took up most of the wall. New Zealand wasn't quite modern then in 1987! Our bands weren't 'psychedelic' at the time but we were never going to be prosaic.

My musical history before meeting Yuri is kind of long. I learnt violin from age 8 but lost interest by 11. I remember being very little and thinking every time you put on a record, tiny people had to gather round a microphone, like a '40s one, and perform for you. Grandma said I had perfect pitch for singing. Sharon O'Neill was my first live concert. I loved the atmospheres in her songs, especially Asian Paradise - steamy and dreamy. My father took us to see her at the SoundShell in Mt Maunganui, NZ's version of the Gold Coast - we had a bach there. It looked like a Flintstones drive-in, the stage was a huge cement seashell. My father sang light opera in his younger days, so he was

pretty musical. I remember going with my father and brother to Johnsonville Mall in the next suburb north on pay day Friday, where he bought a tape cassette player and the Beatles' 1962-1966 tape. Those simple things cost lot of money in those days, New Zealand had trade embargos and everything was so expensive. It was a like a Soviet-bloc country economically pre-Rogernomics, but we didn't know that. My cousins in Hamilton (upper North Island) had lots of great records. Like the Jam's That's Entertainment. I liked the melancholy, and listened in the carpeted lounges with Uncle John's deep-sea diving bounty for company: corals, shells, a strangely life-like conga eel.

I picked up viola at secondary school as all my new friends were classical musical nerds and I didn't want to miss out on all the music groups: baroque orchestras, string quartets, choirs.

When I started listening with Yuri to records, I became more interested in how music was made up, constructed, 'cause he'd get to me explain what the chords were. After being indoctrinated with music theory and learning to read it, I kind of 'see music' in patterns. I think he listens more for atmosphere, emotion.

HC: In a number of places you've mentioned a band you used to know and play with called The Brothers Gorgonzola that you described as 'Wellingtons Rolling Stones'. Do any of their recordings exist? They're virtually non-existent in the online realm today.

YURI: I'm really glad that you've asked us

about this. The Brothers Gorgonzola were a band fed on the fresh entrails of the original Wellington punk rock scene with its gritty skinhead/art rock/ avant-garde jazz inflections. We were too young to play with them or to witness the late 70s/ early 80s scene that the Gorgonzolas must have emerged out of as teenage fans of bands like Shoes This High and Fishschool. A guy I knew who led a small mod revival scene in Wellington replete with long green parkas but no mopeds, and who knew what a huge, proselytizing Velvet Underground fanatic I was, one day in 1986 told me that if I liked the VU I should definitely check out The Brothers Gorgonzola. After that I started noticing the Gorgonzolas' little black and white photocopied posters pasted around town proclaiming to be 'the best band in world', and when I went with Helen to one of their gigs at a venue called Thistle Hall where we soon found ourselves in drunken, blissful, totally jangly heaven. After that Dunedin didn't matter so much anymore. We'd spot Francis or Paul or John or the other various members of the Gorgonzolas around town - or their cool, proto-grungy friends that were always at their shows with them and were fantastic musicians in their own right, like Merlene Chambers or Jessica Walker (of Shoes This High, Fishschool, Sparky's Magic Baton and, later, The Electrick Church) - and we'd literally follow them up and down Cuba Street then meet up and exchange notes about our exciting experiences stalking The Brothers Gorgonzola.

They were the first band that I heard someone criticise for not being tight

enough. Which turned out to be wrong, actually, as when we got to know them a little it turned out that they practised a lot, all the time really as for a while they were one of those bands that basically lived in the same house together like The Beatles did in the *Hard Day's Night* movie. In fact, they were so tight that they could afford to be loose on stage and that was what was so good about them. You would go to their gigs and of course you'd recognise each song, but it wasn't like they went through the exact same paces exactly the same way each time they performed them. But that's not how a lot of people like their music – they want to hear the song they heard and liked on the radio reproduced the same way live. And that's fair enough. Sometimes it's just one particular hook, one particular sound that catches people's attention and emotional engagement with a piece of music, and that's what they're waiting to hear ... on repeat. Nevertheless, The Brothers Gorgonzola weren't like that, their songs were concepts, not particular arrangements. In that way their approach was close to jazz, which is a seam that seems to run through a lot of Wellington music, and this allowed their songs to reach for a certain emotional and musical peak each time they were performed. Marshall Speakers was one of our favourites in their set, a sort of a paean to rock'n'roll, building slowly but inevitably up against a backdrop of heavy, descending chords – a semitone down, a tone down, another tone down to reach the bottom and then the distorted guitar chords hauled you breathlessly right back up to the top again only to start the descent down time after time just like your uncle Sisyphus – while Francis seemed to improvise a lament to love gained then lost: I've got a stack of Marshall speakers... I was amused and gratified to realise that this was basically the same chord progression that Mick Jagger and Keith Richards had used when they penned the lovely and sad *As Tears Go By*, which Marianne Faithful reprised in a similarly Gothic way to the Gorgonzolas in the mid 80s.

I wish that The Garbage and The Flowers had practiced as much as the Gorgonzolas did. That would be my ideal and I think we really could have reached for the stars if we had. It was just that we always had trouble getting together for rehearsals and so we ended up de facto practising on stage which is an entirely different and much scarier proposition, the primal fear and necessity of which has, unfortunately,

never left me.

There are a couple of tracks by The Brothers Gorgonzola floating around the net, one from a compilation LP and another from a double A-side single they once made with a much less exciting band. They were poorly documented, like a lot of Wellington underground music. I wish I had taken better care of their live cassettes which they sold locally and which were testament to their true, raw power. I hope Torben Tilly still has them.

HELEN: There was a peculiar dance their acolytes did where you wagged your wing (arm) like a chicken and ran up to the stage and back. Which we really got into and practised at home to their tapes. Everyone did it, it was quite a scene. People rushed to the front when they started. Getting obliterated. They were really rhythmic and did stuff like rumbas with rock n'roll themes. Alcohol! was one song that sticks in my head. They were our band, not some blow-ins from Dunedin, and we would spot them around town, carrying guitar cases. Far more raggedy than we ever looked and much, much older.

But they weren't that much. You know how when you're 18 people even 2 years older look so mature? They were kind of the poster band for 'dropping out', they really lived it. I remember feeling embarrassed telling them I was at uni, too straight by far. Now in my old age, I love being a square.

HC: You described The Spirit Dog Hotel as the physical and spiritual base for the Garbage and the Flowers. What significance did The Spirit Dog Hotel have on the formation of the band?

YURI: The Spirit Dog Hotel was an old fibro shack hidden in the bush on a hill in Roseneath high above the cold waters of Wellington Harbour. A little cable car took you up the steep slope from the sea and onto the craggy little path that led to the Hotel, under windswept native coastal foliage from whose dark corners little goblins would leer as Helen and I returned from days out taking acid, careering through the streets and botanical gardens of the city. I lived there with my best friend, Daniel McLaren, in the days when Helen, Paul Yates and I formed The Garbage and The Flowers.

I jammed there for the first time with Paul and Bryn Tilly when we put a song together called Sweet Nicki and Paul and

I sussed each other's guitar styles out and realised we could really play well together. I wrote *Carousel* there on Daniel's tanpura which his girlfriend's dad had brought back from India and whose four droning strings Daniel had tuned to the basic octave, fourth and fifth intervals which I used on that song. I was proud that I did little to determine the musical structure of that song other than take that giant gourd of an instrument down from the wall where it was hanging and pluck the strings in order. I thought that it was a bit like Found Art. Later with Helen we recorded the version that we would release on our first single, on Daniel's Fostex 4-track cassette recorder. We knew we'd made something special and that night the ghosts of the house seemed to demand payback for the favour they allowed, making Helen moan and toss about so much in her sleep that I ended up cursing and shouting at them to leave her alone. (Daniel later told me how he would make a point of always welcoming the spirits of the house in whenever he'd come home and, at night, bright rays of light would flash from corner to corner in the room where he slept.) We heard stories that someone had murdered their lover in that house. That might explain why it had been left so dilapidated and undeveloped over the years. We wrote many of our first batch of TGATF songs there, like *Nothing Going Down At All* with Paul. Songs seemed to come naturally to us there.

HELEN: Walking to The Spirit Dog Hotel late at night, Yuri named the band. Me, him and Paul were coming back from town in 100 mile-an-hour winds, I remember clinging to lamp posts at Roseneath shops before we could finally cross the road. It wasn't unusual in Wellington, these big fronts coming off Cook Strait. It was inspiring being so high above Harbour, it was inspiring going to The Spirit Dog. I got paranoid thinking 'The Garbage' was a reference to my messiness.

I think *Carousel* was composed a few days before I rocked up and Yuri played it to me over the phone? I wrote some lyrics for last two verses and a bit of a chorus going down from Khandallah on a steep bush track which ended up at the wharves. I caught a Sunday bus up to Roseneath with my notebook. Yeah, we knew we were onto a good thing, it all just flowed so naturally. That night I thought we shared the same dream and Yuri thought so too. Daniel coming for us with an axe! Then we got up and played

our guitars. We were sort of riding the tail of a couple of not so great trips. I'm glad something came out of it. It was beautiful there with all the tangled trees.

We were a bit hippy-istic and Yuri and Daniel especially used to talk about auras. "He's got quite an aura". "His aura has completely changed". As if it was in their faces, like a traffic light change. But they always ended up taking the piss and Paul had a great sense of irony. We mostly sat on the floor to play. Paul would kneel with his pedals.

There was a band room setup in the lounge and we would all share instruments. Sometimes Paul and Yuri would manipulate each other's pedals if we were recording tracks. Playful!

I really like the 4-track recordings we did best. The sounds were all mashed up. Sometimes if we needed more tracks, the boys would use the complicated system of 'bouncing' when mixing live. I do like the distortion, it's the oil in the painting, and helps everything bleed together.

When TGATF got going and I was the main drummer for a while, I used to get there early to The Spirit Dog and practice along to the drum parts on Bob Dylan's first three electric records for hours. Queen Jane Approximately was my big template, the loping drums, oh, and to Schoolly D. It was really nice of Daniel to let me do that. He was usually painting in his room, redoing antique maps of New Zealand in water colours, this strange job he had for an antique dealer while I binged and bonged.

I didn't really do any writing on my own till I started keeping a diary, and we needed lyrics for TGATF songs. Kristen got me onto it, from Entlang and Dress. She's a great writer and has a dense imagistic style. She was often at The Spirit Dog, and played in Bolo Bolo with Bill Dieren. She would leave scraps of paper around with poems on them, which I admired.

When we were playing and recording a lot there, I started hearing music in my dreams. It seemed really unnatural and truly psychedelic, nothing human.

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THE GARBAGE AND THE FLOWERS

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HC: Other than Leonard Cohen and the Velvet Underground, what else did you draw inspiration from in your songwriting process?

Yuri: Dunedin, The Dunedin Sound, was really a dream to me. I don't have an insight into what it was like in reality. Radio with Pictures used to be the only good thing about Sunday nights back then in NZ. It was like a much cooler, alternative Countdown and was hosted by a sardonic chick called Karyn Hay. In 1981 I became aware of rap music thanks to that show, sitting on the couch watching The Message by Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five, with my father standing with his hands in his pockets in front of the TV the way he used to, equally as engrossed as I was seeing something so completely new for the first time. Later in 1983 when I was 15 they played an old segment from the punk rock era where I first laid eyes and ears upon Chris Knox. It was just a few seconds of The Enemy playing in a small venue in Dunedin but to me it

was like seeing The Beatles in The Cavern. Chris Knox was snarling and growling and pushing his mohawk-crowned, beak-nosed face right up against the TV camera, singing the most mesmerising, slowly drawn out and impassioned melody that I'd ever heard while the shadowy, thin duke figures of Alec Bathgate, Mick Dooley and Mick Dawson played through the glorious three chord structure of Pull Down The Shades in that inimitable slow punk groove of theirs, as heavy and deliberate as a tractor, the sound that must have 5 or 6 years earlier also entranced Peter Gutteridge, the Kilgour brothers and Martin Phillips as well as all those other teenagers that would go on to become the main bulwark of Flying Nun. It's interesting to listen to old live recordings of The Enemy from 1977 and 1978 – and there's a bunch of them that you can dig up on the internet now – and hear what is basically that same poppy Dunedin guitar sound already there, pretty much fully grown, beneath the punky distortion.

HELEN: Yuri has always been more punk than me in his influences. I was a bit revolted by Chris Knox and the full punk theatricality. I remember seeing John Cale (the Artificial Intelligence period), at the Electric Ballroom, upstairs on Victoria Street. This great summer of '86 when so many amazing acts came through Wellington from overseas: The Go Betweens at the Wellington Festival, Look Blue Go Purple, The Residents, Nico. I remember seeing the Died Pretty posters in Manners Mall, and this virulent rumour swept the town that the front man was Iggy Pop's son. Incredible. Could it be? We were fresh out of school, had our first jobs and A-Bursaries (like Austudy) and had money to go out with. But anyway, JC played his piano and a few people were heckling good humouredly, which Yuri was really into, and John too. He called back to them. But I was scandalized, this was a genius - playing the piano - an untouchable. How could they! None of this cavorting.

YURI: Pretty soon after meeting Helen I started exploring the kind of music that would have inspired my musical heroes, like Leonard Cohen and The Velvet Underground, going back into the past rather than hanging out for the Next Big Thing in the present. Just about the last thing me and Helen tried to get into on the basis of a recommendation in NME was The Jesus And Mary Chain who, like us, used Uptight: The Velvet Underground Story by Gerard Malanga and Victor Bockris – and all of its beautiful black and white photog-

raphy by Billy Name – as a kind of bible, certainly as a fashion bible. I think they were pretty cool now and have stood the test of time, but their debut album I went out and bought the day it was released in 1986 and sold to a second hand record shop the day after. We were looking for something more original by that stage, and we found it in the past. Bo Diddley was very important to us and our ideas about getting the right guitar sound.

"I don't care 'bout anything at all. Cause I woke up to see a brand-new day.

And if you want to hear my voice just call. The sky reflects another broken door.

The Yellow Beast polishes his horn. He's got you on his silver hook. And reads you like an unstitched book.

Nothing walks at all. They try to but they only fall..."

Johnny Cash. I resisted Bob Dylan for a long time because I considered him too commercial, but the floodgates opened and I'd listen to all 17 minutes of Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands on repeat all night.

HELEN: Pre TGATF, we did do a lot of research. At one stage we were even studying '50s sheet music, drawing on older things like Broadway hits, mainly for the flavour of the words. There were bins full of it at Slow Boat Records on Cuba Street, surrounded by op shops where everyone got their clothes. One I've still got is Yellow Bird that the Mills Brothers sang. Five people wrote it! "Yellow Bird/ High up in Banana Tree/Yellow Bird you sit all alone like me." It was probably linked to Lou Reed's youth, maybe he said in interviews that's what he grew up hearing in New York? We got in pretty deep with the VU, led by the revelations of their influences in the Victor Bockris book. Come to think of it now, the unreleased Yellow Beast is probably our unconscious bastardization of Yellow Bird. It certainly has a similar crooning ring to it.

More influences. I bought a book of poetry by Delmore Schwartz and fell in love with his face on the cover. He was Lou's lecturer at Syracuse who he said inspired him to write, and he wrote the famous short story in Dreams Begin Responsibilities, which is super philosophical and meditative. It had a kind of esoteric back layer which I really like about Bob Dylan's

lyrics too. I wrote an essay on his work in American Literature 202 and developed a complex about having a small nose. I'm always chuffed if our lyrics can capture a similar enigmatic quality where the words are symbolic of something else. Later in Sydney, we lapped up Bob Dylan's Chronicles, where he gave out secrets like about arranging chords in sequences of odd numbers.

YURI: Finally, I have to mention that there's always been a rich stream of Big Star running through The Garbage & The Flowers. Our friend Lasky brought Helen and me copies of their first two albums from one of his record buying trips to Auckland back when we were 19 years of age and I was living on The Terrace above the city in Wellington. I think Alex Chilton's guitar playing has been a big influence on me.

YURI: I don't think mine would have unfolded at all. I think I'm pretty much a wet rag, musically speaking, without Helen. Even though most of our songs have been kind of engendered by me, I don't have the killer instinct, the confidence nor the musical chops to finish that much by myself, unfortunately. She's a great writer, a great inspirer, editor and producer. I've always relied upon her right from the very start to let me know if a chord progression or a particular rhythm or anything really is worthwhile.

On the other hand, I doubt that she would have had much of a musical journey without me, either. But in her case, it would have been more a matter of not having enough interest in it. I think she's always been more of a writer, despite having all that prodigious musical ability. I don't think I've ever been that great a musician per se. But then very early on I decided that music was much too important to be left to musicians anyway.

I used to think that Helen and I had stolen Paul away from whatever it was that he was otherwise going to do musically, probably something that was very punk rock. He did later play in a band called Pit Viper when he moved to Auckland, with Rob Lundon and Rosy Parlano, which was very punk and extremely noisy. Paul played with his back to the audience and his guitar right up against the speaker cabinet while Rob was out the front fulfilling his dramatic Pete Townshend moves. They were like what Helen and me first read about The Jesus and Mary Chain and what made them seem so intriguing, that they'd go out on stage and play a wall of distorted guitar sound and then

leave after 20 minutes. Except that in Pit Vipers case their wall of noise was a few layers thicker and they were done after about 2 and a half minutes.

HELEN: Who knows? Without Yuri I might have been an unemployed Goth with a few babies, not that there's anything wrong with that. Probably some sort of writer but very secretive. Musically? If I hadn't met Yuri, I might have just ended up being in the Victoria University Orchestra, scraping away on my viola, in a different social group entirely.

I'm not an especially confident person - who is? When I'm having that feeling it always caves in, and I feel awful so anything that takes the attention off me is where I thrive. I'm much more comfortable with song writing or arranging, that privacy, than performing or practising. He's naturally a bit more confident and can finish things so it's a good combination, me operating on his songs, though sometimes we write half and half, we just sit down and do it. It's good having two lyricists, one can throw in a line that makes all the others more interesting but to the listener it's seamless. He really cogitates and can slow down and rewrite his lyrics, mine, I just go splat, it's whatever hits the ground sticks. I always thought he had incredible talent. Maybe it's the gypsy blood, his maternal grandfather was a gypsy who settled down in the Ukraine.

HC: Could you tell us a bit about the music culture you grew up around in Wellington? Was it similar to the South Island's Flying Nun scene? Did you feel like you were a part of that sound in the South Island?

Yuri: I was part of the fandom of the South Island sound. We used to learn about music going through the stacks of records that you could borrow from the Wellington Public Library downtown. I heard a lot of stuff like that back then. You could listen to the records on headphones in there or you could actually take the records home with you which is pretty amazing when you think about it now. I borrowed Boodle Boodle Boodle by The Clean one day, I must have heard about them at school as their first single actually went to Number 1 in the national singles chart in New Zealand. Anyway, first time listening through I didn't think much of it, wondered what all the fuss was about. Not sure why I bothered to give it a second go but I did and I don't know what it was but all of a sudden I was hooked and I was part of that cult from then on.

Later when The Garbage and The Flowers started doing gigs around Wellington in 1991, people used to say that we were like a throwback to that South Island sound, like we had arrived a bit too late and were in the wrong place anyway.

Wellington had a connection to Dunedin early on via George Henderson and the scene around The Amps and the And Band and The Spies who in their turn had their connections to the Wellington Free Jazz scene which was centred around The Primitive Art Group and Braille Records. Helen and me as youngsters used to spot those Primitive Art Group guys playing their weird acoustic music, dressed like real bohemians with their moustaches and goatee beards and second-hand clothes in various arty cafés around town. Much later on we met the main brains

behind that scene, Stuart Porter, when The Garbage and The Flowers went to record at Angry Dog Studios in Manners Street downtown, a studio which Stuart ran with Brendon Ryniker - who had been in The Wart, one of the few Wellington bands with a Flying Nun presence - and where Richard Sedger, formerly of The Amps, also lived. That was a real experience meeting those guys, they were like from another world, much cooler than ours. At the time Stuart had turned his back on that sort of jazz music and he and Brendon and Brian Hudson had formed a band called Tongue, heavy industrial gothic punk though again with a free jazz edge. Tongue was uber cool and uber heavy. They spent much of their time perfecting a set of studio recordings of their songs and, as the studio belonged to them, there was no need to pay by the hour and finish up as your money ran out, so they never stopped working on them, perfecting Brian's songs continuously and meticulously, rerecording parts until they were unrecognisable from the original, putting Brian's vocals through effects until it no longer sounded like him. Tongue blew a lot of people's minds as they were one of the first bands in New Zealand to use samples live in their gigs. The Dunedin cognoscenti were, apparently, mightily impressed by Tongue when they went down to play in Alastair Galbraith's much celebrated Super 8 Club, the second time with Helen on vocals and viola. They were treated like gods by those Flying Nun and Xpressway stars but

would have been way too Wellington cool to repay them with any show of respect in return. There was a story that somebody ended up pissing over somebody else's floor during their stay in Dunedin. It was all meant to have been the result of some kind of sleepwalking disorder but back in Wellington the tale was nevertheless related with glee and a certain amount of pride.

HC: Do you think the creative community surrounding you helped refine the improvised, noisy sound that would be synonymous with TGATF, as you enjoyed bringing people on stage to improvise instruments, wail, and dance?

YURI: Tongue had one quite triumphal concert in Wellington in late 1991 in a warehouse behind Webb Street at the south end of the Te Aro flats. There was a real buzz about them by that stage and everyone from every faction of the underground music scene in Wellington seemed to have turned up to watch them perform with obvious awe and the respect reserved for such elder statesmen of the scene. Maybe we all knew how much musical history was wrapped up in Stuart Porter's and Brendon Ryniker's latest band but it was also about Tongue's cutting edge use of technology and their dark, industrial sound. It was very much a progression of The Gordons and The Skeptics' sound which was widely loved by everyone at the time and in fact, Nick Roughan from The Skeptics was the engineer that night.

It couldn't have been a more different atmosphere from the audience fare that I had got used to at your average gig by The Garbage & The Flowers where the same kind of people - if they were around at all - would turn their noses up at us. In fact, Nick Roughan was also the sound guy at our first ever gig and when at sound check Paul started up our song Catnip with his signature guitar feedback squeal, Nick jumped up on stage to see

where that terrible sound was coming from. That was when we supported This Will Kill That at The New Carpark which became our regular venue over the following year. Jeremy Armitage's This Will Kill That and David Coventry's Amazing Broccoli were like the leading edge and doyens of Wellington grunge music at the time which was just before Nirvana exploded and made this particular post-Pixies sound mainstream. These bands emerged out of the Hutt Valley hardcore skinhead punk scene I think but by the early nineties their hair had grown long and Jeremy in particular was swaggering around like a sexy, bottle blonde, leather clad hard rocker making a noise that owed as much to Sabbath as the Pistols and certainly a lot to Sonic Youth who I, incidentally, detested. Amazing Broccoli was the first band I heard after The Pixies to use the soft-loud-soft dynamic. The Garbage & The Flowers I guess fitted in like their slightly annoying, psychedelic cousins. We started bringing people like Amanda Raisin and Sam Penny up on stage to wail and dance partly because it was seen as the wrong thing to do at the time but mainly because it was part of a free kind of aesthetic that we found ourselves growing into.

HC: I read in Noise in my Head that you never really bothered practicing and just waited until you played live. Why was

being 'tight' never a prerogative for the band? Were you more interested in the emotional expression of improvised and 'loose' music, or was it in active defiance to a broader understanding of music?

YURI: Tongue were tight. The Garbage and The Flowers were loose as. The early nineties were the era of tight music. It seemed to be the only way a band could be complimented in the local music press in those days. We almost started reacting against that, getting looser and looser, inviting more random people on stage to dance and sing or play with us and knowing that it would annoy the hell out of some people. Someone, in a rare mention of us in a local music mag called Rip It Out said we were like a Christian band which was amusing. To tell you the truth, when I saw that there was a review of us I couldn't bear looking at it. People were quite disparaging of us and still are, I think.



Red Star
 Shining where the workers are
 And the road to you is hard
 Red Star
 Workers of the world
 The one eyed pyramid is stacked
 with gold
 And our philosophy has long
 foretold



We did want to practice but it just happened to be the case that we ended up being a bunch of people that for one reason or another just couldn't get it together to all make it to the practice at once. Plus, once we made it onto the stage we were all quite shocked that, invariably being one of the support acts of the night, the sound system hadn't been geared for us and so we all couldn't hear what we played. I mean you could hardly hear what was coming out of your own instrument let alone anyone else's and so what exactly were you supposed to do then? I suppose the answer to that question that the tight bands came up with was to practice so much that everyone in the band became an automaton within a larger automaton and that meant you could just rock up to the gig and go through the clockwork motions that you

had learnt at practice together and that was what everyone called music. In the end we became quite relaxed about it. We'd spend ages before the start of a song just tuning up while the audience watched us and, quite naturally without planning it, the tuning up would slowly turn into the song itself as we, one at a time and then more and more in unison, had a tentative go at the chords and motifs of the song.

That's how Carousel developed as we played it live on stage and I remember being aware of how Stuart Porter the first time he played with us seemed to quite calmly join in with what we were doing, I suppose because he had all that background in improvised music anyway. I think our audiences in Wellington must have started to get into what we were doing and the psychedelic edge to our music that had begun to develop. Somebody told me that one time when we were playing at a benefit concert for Greenpeace with a bunch of other bands that it was once we got up on stage that you could see everyone's spiffs start to light up in the early evening darkness. That was the first time, I think, that we were engineered live by Brent McLachlan - the famous drummer from The Gordons and Baileys Space. I don't know if he even liked us that much but he was a great sound guy and some of our recordings that have ended up on vinyl owe a lot to the fact that he was behind the mixing desk.

HELEN: Yes, we were considered very unco - uncoordinated (and uncool) - for our ramshackle mess. First, we weren't good enough to be 'tight' then it randomly became our style. It was pretty much accidental. We did a helluva lot of supports and would aggravatingly play far too long for the headliners. I liked the competitiveness. The others didn't care. We were also frowned upon a bit for putting up our own posters.

The most extreme example of our unravelling was when I entered us into a Battle of the Bands, again at the Carpark Outer Limits Club. In the spirit of entrepreneurship or gaining some 'chops' so I thought. Amazingly, we got placed in our heat and continued on to the semi-final playoff populated by metal bands from the Hutt Valley. We ended up tangled in rolling tumbleweeds of feedback where the songs broke down completely. Paul was on fire, he was our Jimmy Hendrix that night. We got through about two 'songs' before the engineer pulled the

plug on us as he was receiving death threats. We had beer cans thrown at our heads and incensed the leather-clad heavy metal fans even more by being agonisingly slow to get off stage. Luckily they had short arms. Stoned on codeine milk and so many pedals to dismantle, we got the fuck outta dodge. We had no idea but at the very back of the venue were they who would become drone masters Surface of the Earth (also from the Hutt) and the music critic Nick Cain. Nick Cain later interviewed us for his mag Opprobrium and SOE became our friends. Donald J Smith from them was the Entlang drummer. There wasn't any category called 'noise' then.

In 1991, Yuri's parents moved to Australia. And at times, Heath, Paul and Torben were all flatting at his place in Taft Street, Brooklyn in the Southern Suburbs. We would sit around eating Mexican Cantina leftovers (where those three worked) playing Omette Coleman, and the My Favourite Things album by John Coltrane - those cats could really take a tune apart. Though we didn't practice heaps, we listened to a lot of music together. We read interviews with the Shocklee Brothers who spoke of having equally very high and very low tones in a piece. So we tuned the drums low and Paul would play really high anyway. Heath was kind of in that spirit too, he played all over the bass, pitch wise. Or 'loosey goosey' as he called it. Once we saw a man weeping at Ali Baba's on Cuba Street where we got our kebabs. You sat inside in carpeted tent booths to eat. It was very late and it was closed. Arabic music blared from the speakers. He was bent over the food trays, utterly desolate. Had we ever seen such a public show of emotion? That was an influence too, to see emotion flowing like that. We were pretty young, just kids. That kind of thing makes an impact. It was the opposite of macho, I guess. The tones of the music and the whole atmosphere reminded us of Ayler and Coltrane transmuting some kind of pain. That's just where our imaginations went.

HC: The Garbage and the Flowers has always seemed to have you two as the core members, with revolving members coming in and out. Was this a conscious decision to always make the music new and exciting, or did it just kind of turn out that way? Did other members have much involvement in the songwriting process? Who is in your current line-up for the new album/touring?

Yuri: The Garbage and the Flowers orig-

inally coalesced into a trio of Helen, Paul Yates and me. Later when we were lined up to play live for the very first time and we thought we had better get some bass and drums we enlisted Heath Cozens and Torben Tilly. Stuart Porter took over on bass and then Kristan Wineera when we reformed for gigs in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland in 1997.

We would never have reformed The Garbage and the Flowers if I hadn't convinced Paul Yates to come and join Helen and me in Sydney in 2004. The name of that band belongs to Paul just as much as it does to me and Helen. Just a little less to Torben also as he became such an important part of our original sound. Through 2004 and 2005 in Sydney we played with Jasmine Guffond from AlternaHunk and Alien Christ, Simon Laer from Lushburger and Grit Salute and Stuart Olsen, who is a legend in his own right, also of Alien Christ. Stuart had helped create the whole grunge sound back in

the late 1980s when he produced his sister Zeb's band, Matrimony, in Sydney and then when he and Zeb introduced big Matrimony fan Kathleen Hanna to what a riot it was to be a girl in a band and they formed Viva Krieviel with her in Olympia and played around the US in the very early '90s.

I was extremely excited to be playing music with Jasmine and Stu as I got the impression when we played at and around the What Is Music? Festival in 1997 that these people – along with Lucas Abela – were the coolest musicians in the Australian punk rock scene at the time.

Unfortunately, Paul didn't stick around long in Sydney with us as old tensions resurfaced and he left to play with his own band while The Garbage and the Flowers turned into a trio again with me and Helen and Stu manning the fort, ably assisted by my girlfriend Sara Shera providing the bucket bongs, controlling our two dogs Lily and Lucy and acting as stand-in.

So no, it hasn't been a conscious decision. I wish no one ever left the band.

HELEN: That wasn't planned, the revolving door either. People went overseas or had other interests. Heath went to teach English in Japan to pay back his student loan. It wasn't like there was any industry in New Zealand for so-called experimental music, not like Ride or My Bloody Valentine with Creation. I guess because me and Yuri are close, like family, we've always been in the same country to keep going with the songwriting.

We can be a bit slack, as Yuri said. Sometimes I'll be working with other people and catch myself saying "It doesn't have to be perfect". And they'll go "What?". And I go "Um...". Stoned Rehearsal is probably a product of that kind of approach. That might keep it exciting, I'm not sure. Is it a play? Is it a rehearsal? Ask the bucket bongs. We had had such horrific experiences with recording in the year or two prior to that – expensive Flaberge sessions where the sound came out dead, recording with an engineer at Torben's who later wiped our tapes. DIY was the only way to go. Stu and Yuri used Zooms to record it.

The songwriting always changes around who or how many are playing. And where. Just before Stu joined, around about Flaberge times, I put my foot down and refused to play viola. Liberation! Looking back, we took a more 'classic rock' approach to songwriting then, a la The Strokes. To me it was like string quartet writing, as there were only 3 of us. That was the era of Henry Where is Lyon. The streets of Surry Hills were full of throw outs around Hibernia House – books, furniture, clothes galore. As usual, Yuri brought most of the songs, and he didn't have far to go as him and Sara were living in the next-door warehouse apartment. But that one was a collab. We pulled Valley of the Dolls by Jacqueline Susan out of my bookcases, one of my latest finds, and adapted the melodic prose. I felt like the book audience approved of our labours, hundreds of minds and eyes.

Stu was also like a songwriter with his drum patterns too, I gotta say. Pretty

inspiring. Have you heard his drumming on the Alien Christ record? It threads everything together, kind of like real-time mixing.

It was a literary time, and Elizabeth features words from Herman Hesse's poem of the same name. The bridge refrain is inspired by an Isaac Bashevis Singer short story. We lived right near the News Corp building on Kippax Street and for a while you could hear the printing presses at night shuffling. News was in the air! One unreleased song Donald Trump AKA Bottle and Cans was constructed from a Daily Telegraph article about the new President's diet I bought back from a nearby cafe. I love that way of working.

HC: Are there any live recordings, 4-track demos, rehearsals, unreleased tracks etc. that aren't featured in your various compilation records?

YURI: Lots. Unfortunately a lot of it resides on unlabelled cassettes which in the early days I used to listen to a lot, so I kind of knew exactly where everything was based on the look of the stickers on the cassette or whatever. Now I don't think I'll ever have the time to go through them all. Stu has a good library of live and practice recordings from the Sydney trio days. If we were more famous, there'd be plenty of resources for heaps of bootlegs. There are a few good recordings from our more recent shows floating around too.

HELEN: So many cassettes, I tried to organise them all once back in the '90s, I had these big stickers for each one – with reviews of each song. Got snowed under, gave up. We need a minion to help us there. The aim now is to protect them from Global Warming.

HC: What can we expect from the new album? What inspired you to get together and make music again and who do you have playing on it, any of the old Garbage and the Flowers members? Are you going to tour off the back of the release?

Yuri: I really have to credit Helen for getting the new band together. I have been enjoying the freedom to improvise a bit more as now there are always one or two other guitarists who can hold down the chords of the songs. Although the last time we played in Brisbane I think I overdid it a bit.

I'm really looking forward to getting the new recordings out there. They are hi-fi, not lo-fi this time so I'm interested in people's reactions to our music when it's not

thickly covered by a layer of dusty noise. We will definitely be going down to play in Melbourne again if we can, hopefully for our record release party.

The latest version of the band AKA Pigeon Ears AKA TGATF Mk III has been handpicked by Helen: Ben Wright Smith who's a singer-songwriter of great stature in his own right on guitar and harmonica, Paul Williams from Panel of Judges coming out of retirement on the skins, Dan 'The Man' Lewis, the creator of Sleep Music, on guitar and keys, and Stu is back this time on bass guitar.

HELEN: Well, we can expect the new album Cinnamon Sea to be released by Fire Records of London before the end of the year. It'll be on 12" vinyl. I have no idea how it will be received. The songs sound shiny not dusty but we like the shine. Red Star has been a hit when we've played live recently. It's on it!

Fire are also reissuing Eyes Blind As if Beggars with a new cover by Torben Tilly, and we have almost got a TGATF website up with old interviews, photos and posters.

TGATF gets played in China, courtesy of the internet, specifically Love Comes Slowly Now. Personally, I was inspired to record again because it's pretty addictive, but I'd also like to reach a wider audience. Maybe we already have and don't know it. I have extravagant dreams of songs inserted into Broadway productions, like Yellow Beast – our Broadway banger. Fire have a publishing arm (Third Side Music), you can find us there. I know it's not cool to spruik but I'd like to be able to afford new insulation for my roof etc... It's like Venus here in summer! SEQ, gotta love it.

We did also start working on a rock opera called Valhalla, it's beginning to see the light.

"I'm sitting in the back of a big black car

I'm going to Nashville to be a star...

You say some call it heaven some call it... Valhalla

(Valhalla)

We till our fields with the bones of the dead

They shot my brother right through his head

Now his blood flows like wine and his bones break like bread

Under the wheels of Valhalla

(Valhalla)...."

