**More Sound Drugs for Your Ears**

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*(Photography by*[*Ryan Halliwill*](https://www.flickr.com/photos/avacuouszenith/)*.)*

Even hardcore fans of New Zealand’s historical indie scene (the Flying Nun stable of The Clean, The Dead C, Bailter Space, The Chills and others, and the psychedelic pop of ‘the Dunedin sound’) might not be familiar with Wellington’s The Garbage & The Flowers.

Named after a line in Leonard Cohen’s Suzanne and influenced by Sonic Youth and The Velvet Underground, they still somehow managed to sound not quite like anything else. Their disparate elements seemed to float separately, almost in contained little worlds of their own, that would only occasionally lock into orbit. Yuri Frisen’s guitars screaming bloody murder in the same breath that singer Helen Johnstone’s calm, considered vocals would drift about on imagined thermals. It is genuinely psychedelic music. It finds no apparent contradictions in gentility and violence – everything is just texture, more sound drugs for your ears.

Their double-album debut from 1997, Eyes Rind As If Beggars, has just been reissued on LP by Fire Records.

Though the lyrics were often improvised, and the music teetering on the edge of abstraction, Frisen and Johnstone were also actually just great songwriters. Drummer Torben Tilly explained: “What I loved about the music we created is that it sounded like it had come from somewhere faraway, that it had traveled a lot of distance and gathered some dust and debris along the way. That said, despite its unhinged qualities we were never really a noise-band even though some strange and beautiful electromagnetic noise would make it to tape. Most of the time it was all deeply rooted in a song.”

“In The Garbage & The Flowers there’s this crystalline structure of a song with its architecture of chords and idiomatic vocal melody. It’s something quite arcane and folkloric, owing a lot to Helen and Yuri Frusin’s song-writing and Helen Johnstones’ sapphirine voice. Being a part of this 5-pronged entity has been something I have really enjoyed and has definitely been influential on my approaches to making music. If all the musical parts work together in an almost mechanical kind of way to create a song it can be really satisfying. Sometimes however, through our own hazardous doing as a band, these songs would become unhinged and collapse into fractured shards of noise and disunion, leaning heavily like wine. This was especially the case when playing live, even if it was intentional or accidental. Part of its beauty was that almost at the same instant that it was falling apart it was beginning to fall back together again, creating a counterpoint of melancholy and joy. I quite like it when it is so chaotic and entangled. Somehow it feeds the imagination and the music takes on a life of its own, revealing secret patterns and ghosts in the recordings.”

There’s really not much we can add to that, except to provide you with some listening material for you to zone out to! (Or more likely, zone *into* – something or somewhere new and exciting.)

Carousel is a signature tune from Eyes Rind, and it appears in three very different versions. One is [a beautiful, viola-led psychedelic pop ballad](https://soundcloud.com/firerecords/the-garbage-the-flowers) that reminds us slightly of Oneida’s work on [The Wedding](http://www.20jazzfunkgreats.co.uk/wordpress/2005/03/pagan-weaster/). Another is a 14-minute live epic.

This raging, electric 10-minute studio version seems to combine the best elements of both!

[The Garbage & The Flowers – Carousel](http://www.20jazzfunkgreats.co.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/02%20Carousel.mp3)

Buy Eyes Rind As If Beggars [from Fire Records](http://www.firerecords.com/site/index.php?page=release&releaseid=00000000999)

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