

Hammer time

The call him Hoss and he hits the drums like he's driving nails. Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Famer Bruce Whitelaw talks to **Chris Chilton**.

BRUCE WHITELAW remembers it like it was yesterday, and who wouldn't? He was barely 19 years old, only a year or so out of Invercargill, and he was coming home a bona fide New Zealand pop star — as the drummer of chart-topping Wellington band Dedikation. “Sh*t, that was fantastic,” he says, down the line from his office in Warkworth, 160km north of Auckland. Dedikation were touring on the back of their top-10 hit single, a cover of the Marmalade song *Wait For Me Maryanne*. Their first Invercargill concert was at the RSA Hall. Ace Invercargill group the Farthings, who only a couple of years earlier Whitelaw had filled in for, were the support band. Whitelaw has never forgotten the sheer, exhilarating rush he felt as the curtains were drawn back and he got to face his hometown audience as part of the headline act — a conquering hero still in his teens. “It was the highlight of my time playing professionally — I felt like I'd done it. It had been a dream and this was a dream come true.” The lights came up and Whitelaw kicked the band into an upbeat version of *I Can Sing a Rainbow (Love Is Blue)*, which had been a hit for American soul group the Dells. He's never forgotten it and apparently some of the crowd that night haven't either. “I was talking to John Kennedy in Christchurch the other week and he said ‘that bloody song, when you opened up that show at the RSA, that was absolutely fantastic’. He still remembered the song.”

IT'S safe to assume Bruce Whitelaw's an outgoing character, larger than life, cheerful, fond of a big laugh. Word is he brought that same presence to the stage when he was drumming in popular Invercargill bands of the late 1960s and early '70s: State Of Mind, the Satellites, Climax, Hammer and, occasionally, the Farthings. That's a decent chunk of local legend right there and it's no surprise to anyone except, perhaps, Whitelaw himself that his part in it is being honoured tonight with his induction into the Southland Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

Continued page D5



State Of Mind: (Clockwise from front) Taff Hewton, Bruce Whitelaw, Jill Symonds (Burgess) and Dave Gillies.

GBD reunion

MATE
MARK WILSON



IT was almost 12 months ago now when myself and four lads — with whom I had only just become acquainted, yet spent more time in close quarters with than most people I had known my whole life — stepped off a rusty Dutch mercy ship with a hold full of the south's finest ale and a piece of home to drink it in. Seems like yesterday — yet on reflection it's hard to imagine it ever happened at all. Sitting in the mai mai last May shooting at the odd duck that was foolish enough to succumb to our carefully orchestrated rouse created with Pedro the robo duck and a few lengths of rubber tied to some old plastic mallard decoys, I was reasonably content in my settled southern lifestyle. I had, with about the same level of expectation tied to the purchase of a Lotto ticket, slipped away a sneaky application to be part of some almost mythical Speight's beer delivery that was shady on details at the least but that sounded like a necessary duty for a Southerlander to attend to. Like the time that rather aesthetically pleasing young lass at the bar actually taps you on the shoulder and gestures to the door — I was stunned to be told “You've made the cut son, in three weeks you're out of here”. Needless to say there were a few preparations to be made that would ordinarily take longer than three weeks, but I pulled it off with a little help from some good buggers up in Wellington who slipped through some speedy visas, and taking the attitude that Fiordland sandflies had made me immune to airborne carriers of tropical fevers — hence I wouldn't need all the vaccinations. Somehow I even managed to slip in a game of rugby for the Verses and a few Speight's with the boys in Dunedin before pushing off. Before that day I had never signed an autograph except when preparing, as a 12-year-old, for the inevitable call up from the Stags that never came. I had never been on anything more than a home video camera except a few brief scantily clad appearances on the news during winter festival, and definitely never been privy to a media brief on what was now inappropriate to say and do in public. Although this may have been useful for me at a younger age. That was unreal enough and the actual trip just shot the belief scale right through the stratosphere. With the beer delivered, the fanfare faded, and life slowly returned to normal with the exception of a few free beers, a good story for the bar leaner and most importantly a bunch of great mateships forged over a cold Speight's, a long way from home. When this goes to press, I will once again be putting my wayward golf swing to the test with the Beer Delivery lads, this time without the tutorage of Steve Williams as we get together for our first — of what I hope to be many — reunion. Watched the Stags Thursday night, southern wild game dinner last night, golf and rafting today and it would be rude not to give some of the local bars a nudge tonight.

If you are looking for any type of household furniture in Southland you can't afford to go past Big Scotty's...

- ✓ We have knowledgeable and friendly staff to help you with your purchase.
- ✓ We carry a wide range of both Imported and New Zealand made furniture, many items exclusive to Big Scotty's
- ✓ We are totally Southland owned and operated
- ✓ Big Scotty's is Southlands Original Furniture Warehouse
- ✓ We are always happy to provide quotes on all furniture items at prices that are hard to beat.
- ✓ Big Scotty's easy terms and finance are provided by Finance Now Ltd.



Don't forget you can use your H&J Smith Card here



IF IT'S A CANNY WEE BARGAIN YOU WANT THEN BIG SCOTTY'S IS THE PLACE YOU NEED TO VISIT WHEN LOOKING AT PURCHASING FURNITURE



BIG SCOTTY'S

FOR A CANNY WEE BARGAIN

Free Call 0800 Big Scotty's (0800 244 726) - 71 Clyde Street, Invercargill 03 214-3012

OPEN 7 DAYS
Mon - Fri 9am - 6pm
Sat & Sun 10am - 5pm

*Normal Credit Criteria Apply