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The Lady Killers: From left, Taisha, Jackie Clark, Tina Cross and Suzanne Lynch.

Confident chicks

MICHAEL FALLOW

It's amazing what you can get away with if you sound good enough.

THEY sing like sirens but they laugh like shielas. The Lady Killers are on the road, channelling themselves through cellphone-holding Jackie Clarke as they negotiate their way inexorably south for their Invercargill concert next Saturday.

"All Our Own Fault Productions – that's us," says Clarke.

"We're our own bosses. We're the performers, producers, arrangers, truck drivers . . . and we're currently driving the wrong way down a one-way thing ," she observes, airily.

This backseat driving contribution is duly noted and we'd like to think a slight navigational correction ensued. Certainly the conversational tone was neither stressed nor chastened. You'd expect poise, though, from any outfit that call themselves The Lady Killers.

'We're of an older age group, so the term Lady seemed slightly more appropriate," Clarke purrs. "Killer is more a muso term – for when you do a killer version of a song."

And, yes, a bit of a femme fatale mystique might have slinkily entered the mix, too. They can live with that.

But what about this here publicity blurb, which refers to Clarke, Suzanne Lynch, Tina Cross and Taisha as "seasoned performers". Ewww. Couldn't there be a better description?

"Hardy perennials," suggests Clarke, brightly.

"We do all appreciate how rare it is that this happens. Honestly, there's not that many people who go the distance. I've been in the business 26 years and the rest of us even longer. We embrace our age, and being hot at our age, and the knowledge that comes with it all. It's a great place to be in."

Mind you, no where is it written that sophistication and silliness can't co-exist in a little black dress.

"We're not going to put on airs and graces and pretend to be what we're not. We just have a great time, sing whatever we want whenever we want, and if you like it that's great. And if you don't, too bad mate, because we're having a ball.

"I think this does come with age. Not being so self-conscious and worried about what people think. We find that when we please ourselves – and we are very hard to please – people enjoy it as well."

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Preserving our Milford

MATE
Mark Wilson

SOUTHLAND is home to one of the world's last unmolested stretches of nature.

Despite a smattering of fishing and low-scale tourism infrastructure, a few roads and the odd Department of Conservation hut, Fiordland is as it was thousands of years ago before some hardy barefooted adventurers stumbled upon some precious rocks and started a regular pilgrimage, thus beginning civilisation in this isolated corner of the deep south.

It is perhaps the only place of its kind in New Zealand and as Southlanders we are charged with at least part of the responsibility to protect its virtues so that the next generation can enjoy its wonders as we have.

As with most great conservation assets and rare landscapes, they are also capable of being used for economic gain.

Tourism and the fishing industry have brought employment and prosperity to many in the region and, over time, these operators have gained an appreciation of how to co-exist with the area and its natural inhabitants without the wholesale degradation that has occurred in other parts of the world that now bear more resemblance to theme parks than national parks.

Now, I'm not a die-hard conservation campaigner. I'm loathe to protest or get involved in strikes and other such behaviour. I'm the last person who would ever vote for the Green Party and consider myself to often be sympathetic to the needs of economic development, but I will share a doobie with Nandor and give Sue Bradford a big fat kiss before I let a tunnel, monorail or any other lazy man's short cut be ploughed through our pristine Southern land to Milford Sound.

For a start, the drive is possibly my favourite and a highlight of the trip. It can be spiced up with some naked body boarding in the snow and/or doing bombs for the tourists' amusement in the Falls Creek waterfall. The kea are hilarious, specially when it's not your car they are tearing apart.

If this isn't enough, it's the life blood for the Te Anau region, which is where I spend my summers, and without the flow of tourists, specially fit young Scandinavian females, the scenery in town would diminish significantly. They can gloss up the benefits of these links to the existing operators all they want but the bottom line is, Milford is worth the drive and the drive is worth the drive.

Look at who is behind these projects; it's not the people of the area – it's developers who, like any good developer, see the bottom line as the primary motivator.

They are not out to do a service to the south, they see these shortcut projects as an opportunity to make money, and fair enough. But if we want to preserve our natural landscape, as unspoilt and as an asset for not only tourism but our own recreation into the future, we can't let it be fiddled with for the convenience of the Koreans or the profit of developers. They come, as we do, to see and enjoy the natural beauty. Let's not ruin it.

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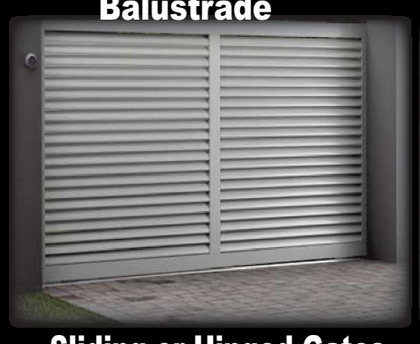
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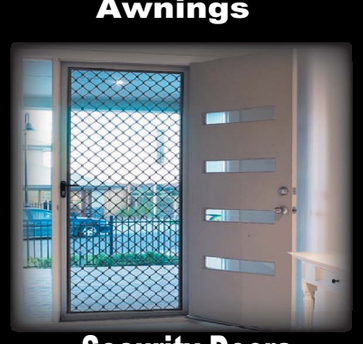
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