

ly, dar... in the aisles, clutching fiercely round the stage, ... the security men. Newcastle's audience responds to Hush not by dropping its cool, but by ...ing further and further out of its industrial head into paroxysms of sexual bop, an intensity that only the band can control. "They're not in trouble when we play 'cause we're the trouble."

After a heartfelt little speech ("Whether you're six or seventy, we all dig rocking and rolling") the band launches into a set of the hard-core stuff — "Blue Suede Shoes", "Shake, Baby, Shake", "Great Balls Of Fire", "Johnny B. Goode", "Rock and Roll Music" . . . You forget how dirty rock once was, what a stir it caused; can still arouse. And what's more, Hush is very good at it. None of your holy rock reverence here, this is wham-bam-thank-you-m'am time, they'll blow your ears off if you let them.

Some hours before, on the way to Newcastle, "the boys," as their manager Peter Rix calls them, had told me about the pressure-valve effect of their final song, "Get Rocked".

"You see, it's written as an 'R' but we don't sing it like that. It gets rid of all the energy we build up, so there's hardly any fights," Keith expanded the matter: "It's like praying, 10,000 people singing GET FOCKED! or . . . (thank heavens for little girls?)



hour sound check. When Quo asked them, "Don't you boys believe in tunin' up?" they replied, "No, we just go on stage and look pretty." They believe in it now, along with lots of other things grown up bands do.

Including security. Their next gig of the weekend, "Rockorama 75" (God help us, what a name), is at Fairfield. There are security men at the gate of the showground with pistols protruding obviously from their hips and mean looks in their eyes. They frisk the kids as they go in. The kids here are an entirely different breed to the Newcastle audience the night before. This is Sharp country — high-waisted jeans reaching to mid-calf, short hair, tattoos, some obvious drug use; the car full of pop stars is quickly spotted.

A pack of little girls smelling strongly of musk get there first. They go from asking autographs "To Norma, please?" to "C'mon girls, let's rape 'em!" in a few minutes, as the crowd grows bigger and heavier. I get more than a little panicky when I have to drive the station wagon somewhere else, quick; partially because I don't drive very well and don't want to mow down any of these scarey little fans — partially because their belligerence is frightening. The kids' attention is half-mocking and they seem hard as tacks, but they're kids after all.

A toothless sharp accosts Rick Lum through the car window:

"Do youse have Sharps kicked out of your dances?"

"It's not us . . ."

"Well we get kicked out all the time, the bouncers hate us."

"It's not us . . ."

Peter Rix theorises on Hush's audience: "Hush was a backyard band in Seven Hills. They're not hotshit players and they don't pretend to be. Obviously the girls' feelings are sexual, but the boys can identify with the band and think, 'Hey, I could do that some day too.'"

Hush also keep in contact with its audience. They have been touring non-stop for the past twelve months, a gig a night, all over Australia. They'll play schools for far less than they usually get, to stay accessible. No slackers, they sign at least twenty autographs per day and make regular appearances on TV and the like. The PR organised by Peter Rix, is constant and keeps them at the top. Mums and dads don't seem to mind their children idolising Hush, because their image is not dirty or rebellious, which is only fair because Hush, after all, are all regular guys.

And being good clean kids doesn't seem to strain them at all. Keith: "We've never done anything naughty but we all want to. We've got a fantasy about checking into a motel room with axes, circular saws, picks, everything we can think of, tipping the

But they do seem to have the pressure eased a little. Les Goch: "Competition's much more healthy. It would be much better if there were six or seven top bands rather than just Hush and Sherbet. That's why Skyhooks have been so successful so quickly, because of the need for top bands." Les also thinks there should be more variety amongst bands, in the manner of Captain Matchbox, so you don't get three heavy rock bands on one bill, all cancelling each other out. Les seems slightly embarrassed at times by the quickness of his path to pop stardom, which is hardly necessary considering how hard Hush work. They call each other pop stars in tones of heavy irony as they get back to Sydney at 3.30 am, knowing they have to rise at 7.00 am to go on TV.

Les and Keith appear on time the next morning on the Sydney pop show "Sound Unlimited", where they plug their next day's concert. Also on the show is Uri Geller who bends people's keys and reads compere Donnie Sutherland's mind, leaving most witnesses visibly shaken. Especially Hush manager and arch-realist, Peter Rix, whose car key is bent from 100 yards away. Then a band of boppers enter the studios, eager for close contact with the group. The stars flee.

Hush, needless to say, find their "bopper band" label irksome. They are also very cautious about becoming known as a support band for international acts. They have done gigs with Wishbone Ash, and Status Quo, and one with the Jackson Five (who, gossip, gossip, have one token white roadie who cops all the dirt work).

Status Quo were the first people Hush saw do a six

He leaves appeased, and dances on the stage during the concert.

Les says gaily, "Now you know how the monkeys in the zoo feel." I do and I don't like it at all. As we sit, temporarily trapped, Keith recounts the time when he was a schoolboy in England and a member of a young band who once toured with The Who — and Pete Townshend told a little boy autograph seeker to fuck off. Keith was shocked then but now he understands perfectly. We are finally extricated from the car after an interminable while, as a gang of jeering ten year olds carol "Skyhooks are better than yez anyway."

Hush disappear into an ambulance caravan to change. It has been raining fitfully all day, but the concert is going on anyway, under an aluminium shelter. There is something gladiatorial about going onto a stage with this audience. They (the audience) dance a bouncing pugilistic sort of step, their fists lightly clenched. One heavily pregnant girl of not more than fifteen is the centre of jovially obscene argument amongst a small gang over who might be the father. She has no front teeth and grins endlessly, her hands folded on top of her huge belly. Later, she dances, a dangerous occupation for both of her.

I ask some questions. Suellen and Jenny are both thirteen and similarly attired in pink and blue, with shiny blue eye make-up and braces. "Hush make music good to dance to. The guitar players are good looking, most of the girls flock over them."

threw a TV set into a motel swimming pool. . . groups do that, but Led Zep's was and exploded all over the place. For the first time, the boys' eyes when they contemplate genuine lust.

But while Hush are lusting for a swimming pool — their fans of course — for . . .

"You need a good management team to bring you down to earth," says Keith firmly. "You have to start to believe in your own hype. It's the best thing since hot chips or God."

It doesn't seem to affect them much. They're young enough to draw a thousand people to a gig in a country town, that everywhere they go is ogled and interrupted, often aggressively.

