

TRUCKIN' DOWN THE HIGHWAY WITH HUSH

Spending three days, three days on the road with Hush is like being in the eye of a hurricane — all quite sane and reasonable from where you are, but step a foot either way and the air is full of flying debris.

Rip-roaring, pop madness surrounds the band relentlessly, screaming, raging, rocking pubescent sexuality is always just a touch away. But Hush themselves are eminently sensible young men. Their heads, as the saying goes, are most sensibly level; they don't smoke, sniff or pop anything, they drink hardy at all and then only "socially", they even have a gentleman's agreement about smoking cigarettes.

In Melbourne they call in the New Breed," says singer Keith Lamb. "We go over like a lead balloon in places like the Hard Rock Cafe where they're bombed out under the tables."

This proximity to reality shows in their attitude to showbiz in general. Guitarist Les Goch, who, at the age of twenty-one, seems to know exactly what he's doing, capitalises the attitude when he says, a touch solemnly, "The Hush organisation is a very well run business."

So, do they think of music as a business then? Keith Lamb, who started singing at the age of thirteen to get out of Religious Instruction and hasn't looked back since: "If you're a savvy nymphomaniac you start an orgy shop, if you dig music you're in a rock 'n' roll band. Maybe we should quit the music business and start an orgy shop."

If they did, you can bet it would make money. Based, of course, on strictly fair dealings. The concerts I saw certainly looked like fair exchange. The audiences came to watch, dance, work up a sweat, scream. Get off, in fact. This they did, in a way which at its most frenzied was slightly frightening.

Hush says "We attract people without inhibitions." They sure do. They've had to stop playing "Summertime Blues", which in their version was pretty raunchy, because people just would keep taking their clothes off. In Perth, at a fairly staid discotheque, one young lady felt compelled to around the stage and divest herself of even her dainty undies. Bass player Rick Lam kept playing although fascinated (and more than a little distracted), until her knickers came off. Strips also ensued at Fozzie, Sydney and NSW Universities. But, one night, during "Summertime Blues" when a girl climbed onto the stage to dance with Keith and had a genuine

SCREAMS, TECHNICOLOUR ORGASMS, TEENAGE ROAD FEVER, SCREAMS

Technicolour Orgasm, the band thought maybe things had gone Far Enough.

On stage, raw energy is what Hush is about. Keith Lamb on the subject: "If a song really turns 'em on, in the next one we'll put out even more energy, and so on until it's like a stone wall. We don't play down, we play straight at 'em — we want to make 'em feel how we feel. When we come off stage we're rosted, and so are they."

Yes?

Yes.

For there we were, standing in the wings at Newcastle's Civic Centre, waiting for the gig to start, and already there was methadone in the air: an atmosphere of high energy mixed with the peculiar smell of burnt wiring. There's plenty of sweat rising — it hovers round the stage in a damp invisible cloud. The same demure young ladies who had hovered around the theatre an hour before, scorns and scores of them in identical knee-length skirts and high cork sandals, are now quaking and shrieking in a solid forest of outstretched hands.

The band open with their own "C'mon We're Taking Over", which works like an anthem. The audience is on its feet and yelling "C'MON, WERE TAKIN' OVER... RIGHT NOW!!" The sheer enthusiasm hits you right in the ribs and leaves you breathless. Hush have had the audience in the palms of their hands before they even appeared, but now their power seems limitless.

Keith Lamb, who had danced in the wings while Ted Mulry's Gang played their set "to get worked up for the performance", struts his stuff like an elegant little boxer: Rick Lam and Les Goch, the two Australian-born Chinese guitarists, flash about the stage, falling into geometric macho poses working together with a rapport that only hours of practice and several stagework gives. Christopher Palthorpe, better known as Snider, grins down from his high rostrum and drums like a locomotive, spinning his sticks, ripping off his shirt.

All that stuff. All your good old rock 'n' roll tricks — like opening the set with their backs to the audience, working off a series of platforms for maximum drama. And they work, both the tricks and the band, vary well. The pop-class flash of their costumes, the lighting, the high-powered growling about — the sum is a highly visual show, a complete rock 'n' roll fantasy.

"We're just a dirty rock 'n' roll band," they say. They do "Get The Feeling", the title track of their first studio album, with a call/response exchange in the middle that the audience loves:

"Where are all the good girls?"

"Yay!"

"Where are all the BAD girls?"

"YAAAAAH!"

Another song, "Caroline" involves a chant from the chicks of "Caroline 69! Caroline 69!" And they know what it means, what's more, although the light-hearted way they toss it out is more in the spirit of good-natured, healthy dirt rather than subversion.

Keith introduces "Temperature's Rising" as "something a bit sexy," and just as I'm wondering what else that night involve, the lead guitar amp blows in a cloud of purple-lit smoke. It looks great — the band hardly breaks stride and the kids love it.

The music Hush play is infinitely better live. So much of its effect is sheer energy, an energy that has translated poorly in the studio so far. Their one live album was a rough, cheapo production which didn't do them justice. "The band we have is just an incredible live sound," says Keith Lamb. "We've just recorded 'Boney Moneys' with Robbie Porter producing, and we did it on the first take, with as few overdubs as possible. It's been properly mixed and it's great." "Boney Moneys", the old Larry Williams rocker, suits their hard, simple style.

Ernie Rose, who produces Hush's albums, has just returned from an international jaunt playing the record for various musicians and producers. The reaction was good, Americans being particularly interested in the "American" sound. "I don't think they would have been so knocked out if they'd known there were two Chicanos and a Pole in the band," Les Goch mutters.

In Australia, the "Get Rocked" album has gone double gold and is still selling.

Musically, Hush all confess a liking for the Faces and the Stones, and those groups' riffs are never far away in their own music. But to the kids in the au-

"Revolution! Rape! Damage! . . . Nah, let's play some more rock 'n' roll". Keith Lamb exhorts an audience into further teenage debauchery.



Photograph of Hush by Sean Clifton.