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At the start of the 1980s, it seemed to Roger Shepherd that the vibrant post-punk scene in Christchurch was going to come and go with no one stepping in to document it. 'There was just so much great music around that was never going to be recorded,' he said. 'If it had been happening in London or New York people would have said, "this is where it's AT."' Working as a manager at the Record Factory in Colombo Street and hanging around the Gladstone Hotel, Shepherd saw a bunch of good bands starting to blossom and it didn't take long for him to ask why he shouldn't get involved. With no musical talent to speak of, and some industry experience gained from his job, he decided the best way to do that was to start his own label. Up in Auckland relatively new independent labels like Bryan Staff's Ripper and Simon Grigg's Propeller seemed to be having some success. Why couldn't the equivalent work in the South Island, where the options were non-existent?

The idea began as a chat in the pub. Shepherd's record store colleague Roy Montgomery, who worked at the EMI Shop at the other end of Cathedral Square from Shepherd's Record Factory, recalled:

*Rather than sit back and let it all happen . . . the conversation moved to 'you know well we've got a couple of bands and we could do things here.' Roger and I knew how the industry worked so it was, oh well we can get things pressed. There are factories here and plants and we can get art work done, it can't be that hard. Roger just jumped to the side of 'I'll stick to making the objects' in terms of the real objects and 'you other guys can go make the music.'*²

PRECEDING PAGE: The Clean photographed in the back seat of Carol Tippet's Standard Vanguard saloon in Jessel Street, Auckland, 1981. The shot appeared alongside a piece by Roy Colbert in the September 1981 issue of *Rip It Up*, one of the first prominent articles published about the band. From left, Hamish Kilgour, Robert Scott and David Kilgour.

PHOTOGRAPH: CAROL TIPPET

TOP: Flying Nun founder Roger Shepherd, date unknown. COLLECTION OF PAUL KEAN AND KAYE WOODWARD

BOTTOM: Flying Nun founder Roger Shepherd (bottom right) walks across the floor of the Beneficiaries Hall in Dunedin while The Enemy, with Chris Knox on vocals, perform onstage, 1978. That same night Shepherd saw The Clean for the first time. **PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF BATTS**

Some bands around town had already started to take action. The Gordons had recorded and self-released their own single and now The Playthings and The Newtones were planning to follow suit. After all the talk Shepherd felt compelled to act. 'I put myself in the situation where I talked about it enough that I felt obliged to follow through,' he said.³⁴ He soon roped in his close friend Paul Smith as a prospective partner and to handle the artwork. Together they plotted out what the label would look like, taking cues from some of their favourite UK independents like Rough Trade, Factory and 4AD. Shepherd felt he had a pretty good grasp on some parts of the business from his work at the Record Factory, especially sales and distribution. He knew what things wholesaled for and what shops in the major centres could sell. 'We will write to record shops we think would be interested in our records, ask them how many copies they want, and send them,' was the rather simple way he sketched out the process just months before the first record launched.⁵



Flying Nun

Records



THE CLEAN YING1 (FN 002)

THE PIN GROUP FN 001

PO BOX 3000

CHRISTCHURCH

Actually producing a slab of vinyl was still a complete mystery. 'I knew nothing about how to get a record made,' Shepherd said.⁶ Luckily for him, Montgomery was already using his company contacts at the EMI Shop to figure out what was involved. Montgomery's band The Pin Group had recorded some songs for a proposed 7" and were trying to self-release it when Shepherd proposed helping out. Making records was a hassle and it was financially risky. A label could help shoulder some of the burden and let the bands worry about the music. 'Roger thought he'd start a record label and that was unheard of,' recalled Pin Group drummer Peter 'Buck' Stapleton. 'It was kind of like "Well what do you do to start a record label?" Nobody knew what you did. . . . So, Roger did this weird thing of starting a label and we were the first band on his label.'⁷

In an attempt to understand the record business, Shepherd travelled up to Wellington to visit one of the two pressing plants in the country. EMI had a plant in Lower Hutt and PolyGram Record Services, where Shepherd went, operated in Miramar. For a 45 rpm 7" single, the minimum run was 300 at PolyGram.⁸ Based on the cost for each unit, it made sense to press up and sell that many just to cover the costs, a priority given there was no real capital behind the whole endeavour.

The new enterprise still needed a name. After some drunken brainstorming with Paul Smith, Shepherd decided he would call his label Flying Nun, after the 1960s television show starring Sally Field. On 13 May 1981, he took \$250 and officially registered the name as a limited liability company. It wasn't long before he had some regrets about the choice. 'The name was one of the last things. A desperation move,' he said a few years later. 'I always enjoyed the silliness of the TV programme. In some respects, I think the name's really silly too.'⁹

Local student paper *Canta* ran a short piece about 'Christchurch's first record company' and was slightly baffled about how it was all supposed to work. 'Flying Nun is a very informal enterprise; there are no written contracts or set percentages – it works on a very flexible basis and relies on 'mutual agreement' . . . I don't fully understand it either, but there's bound to be some method in [Roger's] madness.'¹⁰ Shepherd later wrote in his memoir that if he had actually stopped and plotted it all out 'it could have seemed too daunting and nothing would have happened'.¹¹ Besides, the whole point of the label was to document the bands he liked, not to sell records. 'There is no way that you can make money from singles in New Zealand,' he said before even releasing a record.¹²

While Shepherd's aims were modest, he still wanted to make a splash with the launch of Flying Nun. The Pin Group and a few other local bands had been lined up to kick-start things, but then in May '81 a relatively unknown band from Dunedin came through the Gladstone. A captivating mixture of psychedelic/garage pop with jagged guitar and fun lyrics, The Clean were so good that Shepherd became convinced he needed them for Flying Nun. His pursuit of the band took him all the way up to Auckland before they agreed to come on board, but a month later they headed into a makeshift Christchurch studio to record Flying Nun's first single on a shoestring budget.

A few short months later, Flying Nun officially arrived with the release of The Clean's 'Tally Ho!' – a 7" single with an opening that 'starts stopped hearts' in the words of Russell Brown. The record sent shock waves through the New Zealand music industry, turning The Clean and Flying Nun into overnight sensations. Over the following months the new label had multiple records in the charts and a smash hit with The Clean's follow-up *Boodle Boodle*. With a record-store counter as a head office, and no sign of a business plan, Flying Nun Records suddenly and surprisingly became a major player in New Zealand music. And all it cost was \$50.

LEFT: The mysterious first promotional material for Flying Nun was designed by Paul Smith and showed the clear influence of Peter Saville's work for Factory Records. Posters and adverts like this appeared in mid-1981 in papers like the *Press* and *Rip It Up*.



The Clean – ‘Tally Ho!’ 7” (YING 1/FN 002)

The best band Shepherd saw come through local hotspot the Gladstone in 1981 wasn't a local act, it was The Clean. 'They were very inspirational,' Shepherd later told the *Herald*. 'I don't think I've seen any band quite like The Clean.'¹³ A few years earlier he had travelled down to Dunedin to witness one of their early messy shows ('A lot of people thought they were awful, but I thought: "This is unbelievable", even though they played the same song four times') and recognised that they had since morphed into a scorching band.¹⁴ He wanted them on the new label. 'The Clean was the first one I wrote to, because I wanted to make a good start,' he said in mid-1981.¹⁵

There was something serendipitous about Roger Shepherd

and The Clean coming together to launch Flying Nun. 'It is just luck really,' admitted Clean co-founder Hamish Kilgour at the time.¹⁶ For just as the new label boss was getting serious about his plan he found a band in search of someone who would release their music but let them do it on their own terms. The Clean's DIY spirit had been shaped by their tumultuous first few years as a band. After feeling unsupported in Dunedin, and nearly falling apart in the process, the deal with Flying Nun validated years of hard work, especially for founders Hamish and David Kilgour.

The two brothers had grown up in small rural communities (Cheviot and Ranfurly) before moving to Dunedin, where punk never broke the way it did in Auckland. 'There was no real "punk" scene in Dunedin,' said

Chris Knox, who fronted the closest thing in The Enemy. 'And the South Dunedin scene was, yeah, V8 Boys, Bodgies, Surfies and they were the sort of people, who prior to me being in The Enemy, would've dearly loved to have beaten me up most times. . . . There were only two surfies I knew that I could stand, and they were David and Hamish from The Clean. . . . They were surfies, but they weren't "surfie" surfies, they were just people who really like surfing,' said Knox. 'They used to go to places that "surfies" wouldn't frequent.'¹⁷

Hamish and David Kilgour might have been surfies but they were also music obsessives. Their musical education started in the early '70s at the Captain Cook Hotel, where their father was manager and their mum ran the kitchen. Growing up in the last days of the hippie era, the brothers

LEFT: The Clean performing at the Coronation Hall, Dunedin, 1981.

PHOTOGRAPH: TERRY MOORE

RIGHT: The Clean performing at the Beneficiaries Hall in Dunedin during the brief period in 1978 when Doug Hood (left) served as their lead vocalist.

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF BATTS



were surrounded by the sounds of '60s rock and the latest glam bands that drifted from the rooms of artists and students who hung out in North Dunedin. Then as punk hit overseas, imports from the UK and the US started to make their way into places like Jeff Ruston's Eureka Records on George Street, where the Kilgours became entranced by bands like The Buzzcocks, Television, The Saints and The Damned.

Local record shops were key to germinating the sound of The Clean, especially when there was no local live music that could compare with what the Kilgours were listening to or reading about in UK import papers like *NME*. 'In Dunedin at the time there were endless pub bands playing cover versions,' recalled Peter Gutteridge, the third member of the original Clean. 'There were no original bands.'¹⁸ The dearth of local activity made the impact of the rare international act that would come through town all the more important, especially when 'the godfather of punk' Lou Reed played there in 1975 and '77.

Aside from punk, Reed and the Velvet Underground were a huge influence on the small Dunedin music scene in the late '70s, especially for The Clean and their forerunners The Enemy. Comprising

Chris Knox (vocals), Alec Bathgate (guitar), Mike Dooley (drums) and Mick Dawson (bass), The Enemy had come together when Bathgate and Dooley posted an ad for a bassist who was 'into Velvet Underground'.¹⁹ The Enemy played a loud brand of proto-punk comprising entirely their own material and sung by Knox, a frontman unrivalled in his ability to captivate and shock a crowd. 'We were sick to death of all the same things that English punks were sick of – you know, the "muso" scene, the powers that be, the "system", etc.,' recalled Knox. 'So yeah, it was the right thing at the right time.'²⁰

The Enemy provided the blueprint for the Kilgours to start their band. While Hamish was studying at Otago University, he had met Knox and Dawson, who were living together recording pre-Enemy song experiments. Hamish was even credited with coming up with the name The Enemy, a play on the *NME*. Watching his friends bash out weird and unusual music, Hamish was inspired to go out and buy a \$70 guitar and drum kit of his own. He taught himself the drums by playing along to the Velvets' 'What Goes On' off their 1969 live LP. Learning guitar was a different story though, and it was his brother David who took it up.

Not long after, David started jamming with a classmate, Peter Gutteridge, who would become the bassist for the original Clean. 'I was 17,' said Gutteridge. 'I'd met David at school. Otago Boys. I was in the band about six months.'²¹ When the two discovered they could actually write songs together, The Clean started to take shape. Hamish started to jam with them on drums. They took their name from an old '60s biker-surf film called *The Sweet Ride*, which included a character called 'Mr Clean'.

The Clean made their live debut in May 1978 at the Beneficiaries Hall opening up for their friends. 'The Enemy were doing their second or third gig and they said "come along and play",' recalled David.²² The nervous bunch had a brief practice before taking the stage and Gutteridge was quickly anointed the singer. The trio proceeded to stumble through three songs, including 'I'm in Love With These Times', petrified about how the crowd would react. 'We did one practice at the back of the hall before we played,' said Hamish. 'I can remember I was terrified that people were going to throw bottles or something at me, and I built a wall with the drums to protect myself.'²³ Roy Colbert, who ran Records Records on Stuart Street and helped nurture the



ABOVE (ALL): Early The Clean gig at Logan Park High School, Dunedin, 1979. From left, Peter Gutteridge, Hamish Kilgour, Lyndsay Hooke and David Kilgour. **PHOTOGRAPHS: JEFF BATTS**

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Clean outside the Otago University Student Union, Dunedin, 1981. **PHOTOGRAPH: KAT SPEARS**