



The Elastic Head Band: From left, Gikas Marks, David Marks, Mac, John Oakley Smith, Leonie Hofmeyr and Mike Dickman.

## Getting out of the vinyl groove

THE Elastic Head Band, according to member Dave Marks, is one of those contemporary music groups now playing "through sheer frustration and necessity" in spite of the dearth of air time accorded their music and the lack of opportunity for public outlet, and in the face of a securely entrenched establishment pop structure.

They are, however, finding an outlet in the complex that has twice before offered them a temporary home — for their Bob Dylan show and for "Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club" — the Market.

They open Upstairs at the Market on January 25, after two previews, with "Roots and Shoots", a show which boasts all original music.

Dave has written, as

### FOLK/ROCK Rina Minervini

background to the show, what he calls "a brief record of an un-recorded group of people", in which he sketches (in an amazing prose style well known to the Press from his Market Cafe days) the circumstances which gave rise to this group, which was established in 1973 and has had several changes of membership.

He bemoans the state of South Africa's music industry since the rock days and the Sixties folk era which has led to much of the country's creative talent leaving for countries where, they hoped, they would not be expected to carbon-copy

proven commercial success.

Those who held out locally emerged in the past in such phenomena as "The Cocktail Lounge and Bar-room Balladeers...a highly unique bunch of soloists, duos, or at most trios, with the occasional 'bread line' group like Abstract Truth".

The development of the new groups, Dave suggests, may rest on their greater experience (most of the musicians are over 30), their greater realism and lesser idealism in comparison with their Sixties counterparts, and, oddly enough, discos and disco music.

The latter are clearly anathema, but by providing the top ten in the original versions by means of "a good sound system, turntable and one disc jockey" they force musicians to look elsewhere for their material.

"Why employ a group of six to copy what you can get from the vinyl groove? I'm not in favour of discos and the mindless tribal boom-boom that goes with it . . . but I'm in favour of ANYTHING that'll wake musicians up and force them to lead rather than follow."



"The Elastic Head Band" Est 1973.

The Singer/Songwriters: A Brief record of an un-recorded group of people. 'Comparisons' with singer/songwriters in the USA and UK will have to be made when refering to our local counter-parts. Simply: there is, and only briefly has been (thru the Folk movements of the sixties and the Black theatre / Jazz movements of the late fifties) NO <sup>public</sup> outlet whatsoever for 'creative' CONTEMPORARY musicians in Southern Africa. For those who compromise and follow international trends, or who leave the country (the majority) there is still a little hope, and in some rare cases even a little monetary reward.

In the USA and UK, and recently Australia (who like the RSA has had the same problems regarding indigenous words & music - because of distance from other 'western' societies, economics and population etc) there has always been a strong case for suporting what the lyrical & musical observers reflect....thru' radio programmes, concerts, magazines and the 'XXX final reward': Plastic/vynil and hence royalties and food etc.

Listening to the SABC going to local concerts, buying local records and reading what little there is about 'locals' in the press, would, and (unfortunetly)does leave the ordinary eared public citizen with the impressions that local musicians do not have any,...impressions that is! Even our annual SARIÉ incident, supposedly an all white indigenous display of 'talent', can not boast at even been remotley original.

All this establishment and executive administrative approach can not kill music altogether. People will always, even behind bars, make instruments if they have to, and sing about what's going on around them.

Contemporary music, in all its various and varied forms knows no political geographical or spiritual bounderies, and must be mankind's (personkinds) greatest communications gift.....it can get accross ANYTHING, anywhere at anytime.....I suppose it's this that has kept so many local songwriters and musical observers 'padding' along, regardless.

Because the folk movement of the sixties offered the only public platform for musical expression, most of our indigenous composer/lyrisists came from that area. (Most self respecting Jazz musicians had already left the RSA by then, and the commercial confusion of the rock scene was economical churning out 'hits....'Carbon-copying their American and British heros.)



Out of this PBP -corn commercial confusion came the frustrated few that couldn't get away, or (rightly so) did not want to. The few rockers that survived the British onslaught (everyone I guess was most grateful for the influence, and boost to contemporary music that the sixties gave us all) or who had left the country and had come back, drifted toward the tattered ~~xxx~~ old-fashioned and highly un-inspired Jazz scene, or toward the dying folk fields.

Economics again: Unlike the drift of the USA and UK 'folkies' and rockers and jazzers into highly creative units (bands), the locals could not survive in large groups....hence the emergence of "The Cock-<sup>TAF</sup>Lounge and Bar-Room Balladeers" cult in the RSA....a highly unique bunch of ~~xxxxxx~~ soloists, duos, or at the most Trios....with the occasional 'bread line' group like "Abstract Truth"...perhaps the best local example of the Jazz, Folk and Rock fusion in this country. Playing and Performing (?) their own material their own way...even the individual members and their backgrounds need a mention: Kenny Henson on Guitar and fresh out of Freedoms Children; Mike Dickman from the Folk movement; Sean Bergen from the 'Blue Note' Jazz days in Durban; George Wolfaardt; Pete Measroch; Robbie Pavid; Brian Gibson; etc. Abstract Truth proved many things: eg that it was almost impossible for a group of that size to survive economically, (without the aid of radio and record,) and that irrespective of that impossibility there was most definitely an audience who wanted to listen and musicians who just wanted to 'play.'

From 1970 on the rockers, folkies and the occasional Jazz, (black & white) ~~xxx~~ drifted in and around each other....taking long shots and living off ideals, and the hope that someday, ~~that~~ someone with the right influence and patience would come along and save the day and its music. Well, except for the usual long 'establishment' shots (chances) by the odd record company and producer, and even on occasion an adventurous involvement by some or other SABC 'official', nothing, for the public's sake happened. So over the past 8 years, hoards of local talent drifted to other countries, and unlike the hope of the sixties, they're not coming back. Why should they?

What did happen though, and what seems to be happening with the 'new breed', is that through sheer frustration and necessity, groups ARE been formed, who may be a little more experienced (the over 30's) or ~~xx~~ are now a little more realistic and less idealistic than their 60's counterparts, and regardless of radio and record, they're playing on.



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Groups are actually finding and financing their own venues, living off the door, Recording, producing and even selling their own records.

(I must say that I feel Discos and Disco music has been largely responsible for this slight state of happy affairs....the Musicians Union and Associations are bemoaning the discos and crying out: Keep Music Live....I Agree,.. but WHOSE ~~MUSIC~~ MUSIC must South African Musicians keep alive? The current top 10 USA and UK hits? No, untill such time as our musicians can make music to keep alive; Right on Discos or whatever it'll take to FORCE musicians to get out of "but that's what they want to hear..."  
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ A few years back it was all very well for local groups to immitate the top 10, but today all you need is a good sound system, turntable and one Disc Jockey and you can play the original thing. Why employ a group of 6 to copy what you can get from the vinyl groove? I'm not in favour of Discos and the mindless tribal boom-boom that goes with it....but I'm in favour of ANYTHING that'll wake musicians up and force them to lead rather than follow. You can't keep music live if it's doomed to die from malnutrition...so let's start feeding.)

The "Ealstic Head Band", cannot perhaps claim to be a 'group' of musicians as such...rather 6 individuals, with 2 musicians (jn Mike Dickman, John Oakley-Smith and Gikas Marks). Mike, whose influence stems from the early Rock and USA Blues Days. He has recorded 2 albums, done a lot of TV & film work, all without the aid of one minutes air-play in the seventeen years that he's been a professional musician. If that's not a record what isn't? Thru' the years Mike has played and performed with many of the Folk and Rock genre, and has been associated with Mac myself and John Oakley for most of his professional musical life.

Gikas Marks comes from a self taught Jazz back-ground. He taught himself to read 'drum' music at 13, and is a highly skilled 'technical' drummer whose influence stems from Buddy Rich, Billy Cobham etc. He has won many awards as a 'Pipe Band' drummer, and one year was voted asbest 'Side' drummer in the Republic.

John Oakley-Smith comes from a semi-classical / folk type of musical background, and is considered by many, not the least of which is Manfred Mann, as one of the finest songwriters in the world today. He has done numerous TV and Film themes and scores, also one commercial LP for Warner Brothers and is busy with a second. Again, true to local fashion,



no one we know has ever heard one title from John's LP over the air. Why?

Mac (Náá! MacCallum) has been associated with the musical and theatrical world ~~xxx~~ since 1966, and has been one of the main catalysts and upholders of indigenous words and music. The 'ideas man' who has performed in many various groups, has also written a number of good, reflective songs, and has initiated many musical concepts and shows. Noted for his stage lighting and productions Mac has featured on many locally produced LP's as a backing vocalist as his ear and mood for harmonies is unique. He has also recorded 2 singles with the EHB. No air-play!

Leannie Hofmeyr, a highly acclaimed actress, is also a very competent musician, who writes her own material, and has tried unsuccessfully, until joining up with the EHB, to get her songs accross. She has a unique vocal style and is interested in all kinds of music. Her stage presence is pretty dynamic.

The EHB has not always been a 'performing' group (the first public presentation was the BOB DYLAN show...simply to help establish the group around a common ideal...without 'compromising' too far in the "give them what they want to hear...." syndrome... ) The EHB was formed in 1972/73 in 3rd Ear's make-shift studio, just to put down on tape, as a group, to expand certain solóist composer's musical ideas. It was more a 'demo-studio' musical thing than anything that could vaguely approach money.

Past members of the early EHB ventures have been many and varied, not least of which have been Mel Miller, Paul Clingman, Ian Lawrence (for a TV special/documentary)...and many others. At one count, and recording there were no less than 12 people in the studio around a couple of mikes.

The basic memberrs /orgioinal members of the group that are still around are: Mac, Mike, John and Myself. We've never had the occassion (excpet for the brief 'Beetle Review') to have a drummer, and with Gikas on Drums, Leonie on Vocals, and a little bit of listening from the right quarters, the EHB has got to move.

David Marks.