

ROGER LUCEY

The Road

is Much Longer...

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Singer Roger sets out to be a Mann's man



Young Durban singer Roger Lucey couldn't sleep on Monday night — he had "songs going round in his head." Roger and his wife Sue left Johannesburg last night for London where he will audition for rock musician Manfred Mann. He was asked to do so after a local record company sent his record to Mann. Even if he doesn't get the position things still look good — his record should be released overseas soon and he may start his own band there.



LAST MONDAY, Roger Lucey left Johannesburg to join Manfred Mann's Earth Band in London.

The rough and raw singer-guitarist from Durban hasn't yet been confirmed as Chris Thompson's replacement, but Manfred Mann listened to his debut album "The Road Is Much Longer" and told producer Dave Marks he liked Roger's voice and would like to work with him.

He also asked Dave if Roger was ambitious or a communal hippie . . .

Roger wasted no time getting to London, and I wish him the best of luck.

Even if he and Manfred Mann decide not to work together, Roger Lucey is going to happen BIG.

I didn't like the stuff he was doing the first time I heard him in Jo'burg's tiny Mangles restaurant last year.

He seemed too theatrical, hysterical almost, for such a small venue.

At the Johannesburg Music Festival, in a large hall with a backing band, he made sense.

On his album, with superb musicians like Kenny Henson on lead guitar and the crystal clear soprano of backing vocalist Alison Williams, he makes even more sense.

I admire him tremendously for putting out such a brave album on a limited budget.

Roger Lucey is the only local songwriter to have completely captured the South African experience in his songs about Crossroads, Steve Biko, the Blue Train, people in detention getting released and then immediately banned, the richies who live in Houghton, hippie hitchhikers, black consciousness and getting deposit on bottles.

We can all identify with everything he sings.

Sometimes he hits so hard with embarrassing topics it hurts.

In "You Only Need Say Nothing" he focuses on the black beggar and the white guilt, the dilemma whitey faces every time he sees a beggar.

Do I give a coin, appease my conscience, create a dependen-

Roger's got it made

cy and perpetuate the system or do I walk on the other side of the road so I don't have to listen to his whines or look him in the face?

"You know it's so damn easy to turn and look away, you only need say nothing to have nothing at all to say . . ."

The turn away and pretend it's not happening attitude of South African whites gets reviewed in "Crossroads":

"... and now all of these people, 20 000 or more/they're going to have their houses bulldozed right down to the floor/and you know, in Constantia and Houghton while nanny brings in tea/they'll say 'shame' and 'that's life, but it's got nothing to do with me.'"

My best on the album are "Windy Days", "The Road Is Much Longer" and "(Pre-Azarian) Christmas Song", in which Roger rambles on like a demented, male Patti Smith.

You'll find the album in a cheerful comic book cover, reminiscent of Joplin's "Cheap Thrills".

After Lucey's fresh vegetable casserole comes a can of sweet fruit from Peter Vee and Buffalo, "Magic Carpet Ride".

Lucey and Buffalo represent the two sides of local white music.

Lucey is original, indigenous and — like John Oakley Smith and Paul Clingman — ignored.

Buffalo's music is second hand but, in our borrowed culture, popular.

The disco versions of numbers made famous in another country and another decade by other people (Steppenwolf, the Stones, Beatles, Dylan and Deep Purple) are well produced.