

I HEAR MOTION

BANDS THAT SOUNDTRACKED OUR LIVES

1980 – 89

JANE GAZZO

The '80s were so good because you could experiment without any kind of fear of consequence.

—Kate Ceberano

The '80s.

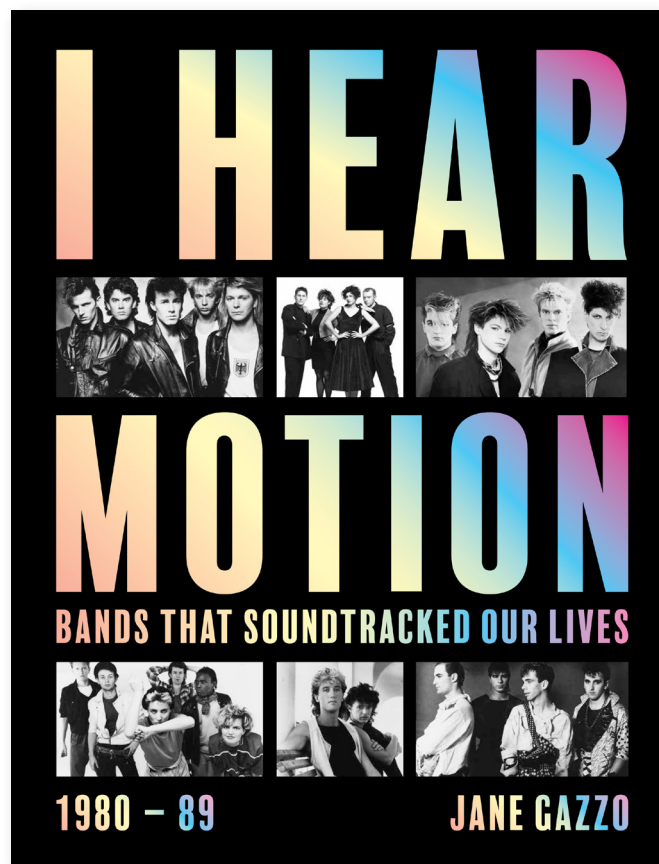
The era of Hawke, a booming economy, big hair, gender benders and the new-wave synth-pop explosion.

Every Sunday night, Australians would be glued to *Countdown* to watch the latest and local bands strut their stuff. Bands who became household names and soundtracked our lives in one of the most colourful and creative decades in Australian music.

I Hear Motion is a celebration of the Aussie bands we loved: Models, Machinations, Wa Wa Nee, Real Life, Kids in the Kitchen, Do-Re-Mi, Koo De Tah, Eurogliders, Boom Crash Opera and more – and what happened to them following the end of the decade. With interviews, never-before seen photos and archives of the time, plus never-before told stories about the songs, bands, excesses and break-ups, *I Hear Motion* is a must-have for every Australian music fan.

An amazing journey through the '80s music in Australia.

—Gavin Wood, the voice of *Countdown*



The Author

Jane Gazzo is a music journalist, broadcaster, author and self-confessed music hoarder. She began her radio career on 3RRR-FM in the early '90s. Since then, she has presented nationally on Triple J and MMM as well as XFM London, Capital FM London and BBC Radio 6 in the UK and has hosted music television shows such as *The Sound and Recovery* on ABC TV. She once worked for Courtney Love as her PA, where she lasted two weeks, and has never worked as a PA since. Jane is co-founder of the *Sound As Ever* Facebook group—a place which celebrates and documents Australian music from the '90s. Her first book was *John Farnham: The Untold Story*, followed by *Sound As Ever: A Celebration of the Greatest Decade in Australian Music (1990–1999)* and this is her third.

MODELS

MAX Q –
WAY OF THE WORLD

It is hard to quantify Olsen's contribution to Australian music. From the short-punk outfit The Young Christians with Rowland S. Howard (77-78) to the more avant-garde post-punk Whyweld? (78-80) with future Models keyboardist Andrew Duffell and countless bands and projects thereafter, including Orchestras of Skin and Bones (84-86) and NO 131 (88). But it was his 1989 collaboration with Michael Hutchence, called Max Q, that initiated some kind of commercial success for Olsen (albeit for a brief period) which has many other projects had eluded.

Olsen and Hutchence met on the set of *Dogs in Space*, where Olsen was the film's musical director. One of the highlight tracks from the soundtrack was an Olsen-produced tune called 'Roses for the Memory' (1987), which was originally written for Whyweld? but never recorded. It became Hutchence's first and only solo hit, peaking at #11 on the ARIA chart. On the back of 'Roses' success, Hutchence asked Olsen to work with him on what he originally pitched as a solo project, although due to spiralling NDS commitments, Olsen didn't have a lot of time to flesh out ideas for an album, so he recorded a few Orchestras of Skin and Bones songs such as 'Sometimes' and 'Ok van-Rot'. He had just a month to make the album.

'I just kept dipping into my past back catalogue to make it work,' says Olsen. 'We produced two or three tunes at Rhinoceros Records in Sydney and I got my friends to come and play on them. And that turned into a whole album.'

Hutchence financed the entire project which also included a qualified chef on-call at the studio to cater for everyone while they were recording. When the album was finished, the only pushback apparently came from NDS manager Chris Murphy.

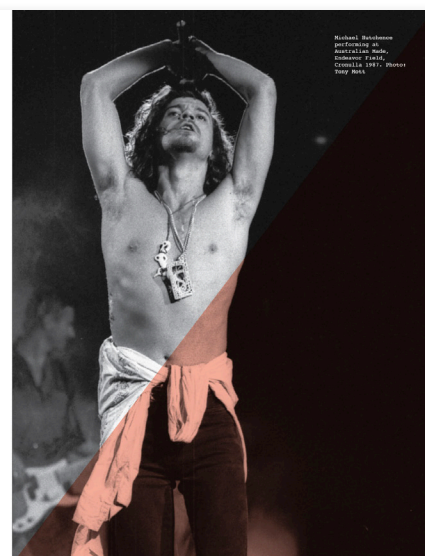
'He didn't want Michael to do it,' confesses Olsen. 'So he tried everything he could to make it seem like Michael wasn't part of the project. And he definitely didn't want Michael on the front cover of the album.'

The Max Q album cover ended up as a pastiche of all the Max Q members' faces (including future Frente and Puffinbush bassist Bill McDonald, future Skin the Animal and The Weekenders drummer John Murphy, keyboardist Gus Tili and guitarists Ame Hanna and Michael Sheridan), and Murphy went out the director that Michael's face also had to be obscured in music videos and that he wasn't to undertake in media promotion. Olsen believes Murphy was worried that any success the Max Q project might have could overshadow NDS or make Michael unavailable for their commitments. Murphy didn't want to take that risk.

'It was really terrible,' says Olsen, referring to Murphy's control directives.

Max Q's debut single, 'Way of the World', was released August 1989, and dealt with thought-provoking subject matter that delved into human existence and politics, with references to religion, consumerism and bombs. It went Top 40 and was nominated for two ARIAs, including Single of the Year and Breakthrough Artist. The song also might have caught the attention of the Australian Securities Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

Michael told me that ASIO were keeping an eye on me because it had those lyrics. I don't know whether I believe it or not but he had an awful lot of connections,' laughs Olsen.



Michael Hutchence performing at Maitland, NSW, September 1989. Photo: Tony Smith

LIST OF OZ NUMBER-ONE SINGLES
IN AUSTRALIA DURING THE 1980S

200

1980
Shaddap You Face – Joe Dolce

1981
Duncan – Slim Dusty

Physical – Olivia Newton-John

Down Under – Men at Work

1982
What About Me – Moving Pictures

1983
Australiana – Austen Tayshus

Backless (Don't Be So) – Australian Crawl

I Was Only 19 – Badgum

1984
Original Sin – INXS

It's Just Hot Cricket – The Twelfth Man

1985
Out of Mind, Out of Sight – Models

1986
You're the Voice – John Farnham

Punkytown – Pseudo Echo

1987
Locomotion – Kylie Minogue

Electric Blue – Icehouse

He's Gonna Step On You – The Party Boys

Too Much Love Aint Enough – Jimmy Barnes

1988
I Should Be So Lucky – Kylie Minogue

Age of Reason – John Farnham

Got to Be Certain – Kylie Minogue

1989
Tucker's Daughter – Ian Moss



Models photo from 'A Beat for You' promo shoot, 1984. Photo: SA



Models, September 1981. Photo: SA

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DO-RE-MI

MAN OVERBOARD

96

As music journalist Andrew P Street rightly pointed out in 2017, Do-Re-Mi's biggest hit, 'Man Overboard', is a savage take-down of a very common dynamic in heterosexual relationships, whereby the male male leaves all the emotional labour to the female half.

In the song, the protagonist refuses to accept being used by a partner happy to make a body out of them male his excuses and depart, to make fun of her insecurities in public and then demand that she excuse his childish behavior because he's the real victim here. (The Long and Winding Way to the Top, 2017)

'Man Overboard' was a Top 5 hit for Do-Re-Mi in 1985, despite not having a chorus, and is one of the few Australian singles to refer to public hat, penis envy and anal sex. Do-Re-Mi came onto the scene guns blazing. They weren't taking shit from anyone. Check out any of their interviews on film from the time. Men were scared of them. They were a formidable force.

'Man Overboard' also launched what would become a long and impressive career for singer Deborah Conway.

I remember it was us not wanting to release it as a single, says Conway. It was us thinking it would never play. I had the record company keep saying, "Oh, yes, they will." And they were right. It was a massive hit. Most extraordinarily it didn't have a chorus so it was really unlike anything else that was played at the time.

Conway was 25 when 'Man Overboard' propelled Do-Re-Mi into the mainstream, but she was more than ready for the fame it delivered. She'd been singing live in Melbourne since 1979 and like many other great bands of the 1980s, like the Wives chapter, Do-Re-Mi came together via an advert that Conway placed in a local newspaper.

'SINGER WANTS BAND.'

She got two responses.

One from an impressive fellow wearing black who had some very grand ideas about the kind of music he wanted to make, and another from a snooty band in the eastern suburbs who wanted Conway to audition for the role of lead singer.

Turned up and there were a few other people there to audition, and they were slightly older men with beards and they were a bit hippy. And you know, I thought, Okay, I've got a pretty good chance here.

The bubbly bitches didn't get a look in. Conway got the gig with the band who were called The Benders, spearheaded by drummer Donal Day. They immediately went out onto the pub circuit and played intensely and Day realised they moved to Sydney and start something fresh.

I didn't care that much, but I wanted to be in a band with him. He said, 'I'm leaving.' I said, 'Okay, I'm leaving too.' And then we moved to Sydney together and formed this band, Do-Re-Mi.

It was 1981 and once Conway and Day had relocated, the pair went about trying to track down bass player Helen Carter of punk band Friction, whom Day had met during a previous Sydney visit. They eventually found her and persuaded her to join the band, along with her guitar-playing partner Stephen Philip – formerly of seminal punk band The Saints. Stephen was initially reluctant to join the trio.

Maybe he wanted some distance because he and Helen were in a relationship together, Conway reveals. And they'd done everything together. We persuaded him to write some songs so that we could play them to the galleries who were auditioning for us, but they would turn up and they would overplay or they would play badly or they would be obnoxious.

Whatever 'C' was, Stephen had it. He was someone who could generate great sounds, so he eventually relented.

97



Early concert lineup
from about 1981. From
left: Helen Carter,
Donal Day, Deborah
Conway, Stephen Philip,
Helen Carter.

GREAT '80S MOMENTS

IVA DAVIES

100

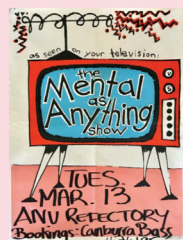
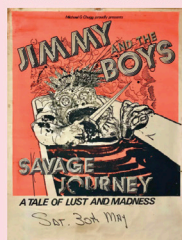
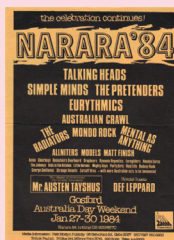
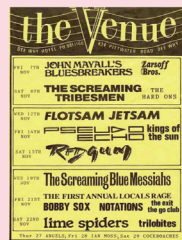
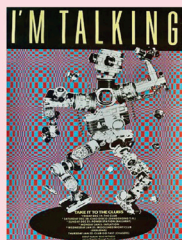
RECORDING THE ALBUM *ICEHOUSE* (1990): "WHEN I WAS MAKING THAT ALBUM, I WAS JUST HAVING FUN PLAYING WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY."

"IT WAS AN AMAZING TIME BECAUSE SYNTHESIZER TECHNOLOGY WAS JUST EXPLODING AND EVEN STUDIO TECHNOLOGY. I THINK THIS ALBUM WAS MIXED ON THE VERY FIRST COMPUTERISED, AUTOMATED, MIXING CONSOLES. SO THERE WERE ALL SORTS OF STUFF GOING ON THAT WE WERE HAVING GREAT FUN WITH. THE PROPHET-5 (SYNTHESIZER) FEATURED ON A LOT OF THE FLOWERS ALBUM."

RECORDING THE SINGLE, "ELECTRIC BLUE" (1997): "IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AROUND 1996, AND I WAS STAYING AT A HOTEL IN NEW YORK THAT I STAYED AT A LOT CALLED THE MAYFLOWER AND I WAS SITTING AT THE BAR AND THE BARMAN SAID THERE WAS A PHONE CALL FOR ME. I ANSWERED THE PHONE AND ON THE OTHER END HE FOUND ME, BUT HE SAID, "WE HAVE TO WRITE SONGS TOGETHER." AND I'M A VERY NERVOUS COLLABORATOR – I'M NOT COMFORTABLE IN THAT SITUATION – SO I MADE EVERY EXCUSE I COULD TO GET OUT OF IT. I SAID, "I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF A TOUR," AND HE SAID, "THAT'S ALRIGHT, I'LL WAIT TO THE END OF THE TOUR." AND I TOLD HIM I HAD TO GO BACK TO AUSTRALIA AFTER THE TOUR AND HE SAID, "THAT'S OKAY, I'LL PACK UP MY GEAR AND COME OVER TO YOU." AND HE DID.

"BY THE TIME HE HAD LEFT AUSTRALIA, "ELECTRIC BLUE" WAS HARDLY A SONG AT ALL. IT HAD SOME BACKING VOCALS, IT HAD A COUPLE OF LINES ... BUT HE MADE ME PROMISE ON THE SPOT THAT I WAS GOING TO RECORD THE SONG, OR HE'D RECORD IT AS A HALL AND OATES SONG – "BECAUSE IT'S A HIT."

"HE KNEW IT WAS A HIT EVEN THOUGH IT WAS ONLY HALF-FINISHED, AND HE WAS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. IT'S THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SONG WE'VE EVER PRODUCED AND OUR FIRST #1."

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