

## **Part 4**

**Interviewer:**

So the Gladstone?

**Peter:**

The Gladstone was run by an older couple and the guy, I think, was like a lot of pub managers, a bit of an alki and his wife actually booked the bands and she ... I'm trying to remember how old she was. She might have been 60 and she wasn't really worried about how people looked or what kind of music they played as long as they were polite and they didn't cause any trouble ... which is great. Then she got ... there were these kind of shady promoter guys around Christchurch and one was shadier than the other, I can't actually remember his name and there were a lot of rumours about them having people rubbed out, causing trouble, and stuff like that ... I don't know if that actually happened but there was definitely more evidence that they might get people to cause trouble at rival pubs and things like that ... I think that happened. The less shady one managed to get into the Gladstone. He was alright but he was just a sharp operator and so then he became a kind of promoter.

**Interviewer:**

Of the punk scene in a way?

**Peter:**

Well in part, yeah. He employed my sister Rose and her friend Laura, first of all to do the door and then gradually, I think, this guy ... Jim Wilson was his name ... he later started that army and navy clothing chain of stores around the country but he must have gone on to bigger things. These guys went on to promoting touring bands and stuff so Rose and Laura basically went from doing the door to booking the bands along with the publican whose name was also Rose, I think, the older woman.

**Interviewer:**

Rose at the Gladstone.

**Peter:**

Yeah.

**Interviewer:**

You guys were in with a grin by that point?

**Peter:**

Yeah. We went from having nowhere to play to being able to play when we wanted.

**Interviewer:**

And you were still the Victor Dimisich Band?

**Peter:**

The Victor Dimisich Band played for the year, often supporting touring bands ... I think we supported Blam Blam Blam and the Screaming Meemees. But we had no real following because we ... what we were doing was actually quite complex, I think, compared to what other people were doing and it was all original. We didn't look like punks. I had short hair

but Tony had shoulder length hair and I think Stephen at times had a beard ... that's like a fashion crime!

**Interviewer:**

Bloody hippies!

**Peter:**

Yeah. But other bands used to like us and often those ... some of those touring bands said good things about us.

**Interviewer:**

You were a musician's band?

**Peter:**

Yeah totally, and bands that looked the part and were musically derivative were much more successful.

**Interviewer:**

That's always going to be the way isn't it?

**Peter:**

Which is alright. We were quite happy doing what we were doing so we just played for a year and then at the end of that year we broke up.

**Interviewer:**

As per the programme?

**Peter:**

Yeah we did. It was funny actually because right at the end ... I mean we never played covers, maybe we did one or two covers in public ... but right near the end we used to. At practices we'd just come together and play a whole bunch of covers and not even practice our own songs because we knew them pretty well just before the end of that. Now there were a number of other Christchurch bands at the time and we often used to play with friends of ours. There were two bands, one was the Volkswagens who were ... that was John Segovia from Vacuum, Norman who'd been in the late Vacuum, and a bass player called Blitz ... for obvious reasons which I won't go into! They used to play, not unlike early Vapour and the Trails ... all covers but quite well-chosen covers and a much more eclectic range of covers with quite a lot of energy and a good sort of fast rock band kind of thing. We used to play with them a bit. We also used to play with 25 Cents because I flatted with two of 25 Cents, with Susan and Mary, and they were a sort of punk/garage ... '60s garage and '70s punk sort of band of women. At their most they had five members. I think they probably started off with about four yeah and they were great and they played ... Mary was the drummer and she was the singer and a lot of their stuff was quite full-on. So I remember her singing and rolling her eyes, drumming, singing, and rolling her eyes ... we used to joke about how she used to roll, because there was just so much she had to do. They used to shock and often there'd be guys sort of in the ... I used to quite like standing in the crowd when they were playing because there'd be groups of guys and they'd get a few wolf whistles and stuff like that. Then they'd start up and the sheer velocity would actually shock these guys and they'd just go silent. They were quite aggressive but we used to play with them a lot and we used to have rituals before we went out to play. We'd have tequila slams which is alright if you're the first band, but if you're the last band it wears off by then! But that was good and we used to use the same gear, share the same

gear ... different people would have a particular amp or something ... in a house across the railways line in Spreydon in Christchurch and that sort of lasted for a couple of years. It was pretty good.

**Interviewer:**

Out of that grew this new?

**Peter:**

Well what happened ... also before the end of the Victor Dimisich Band ... one day I was at the Gladstone and these two guys who I vaguely knew came up to me and they said 'We want to talk with you outside' which I was kind of intrigued by. I sort of vaguely knew them because we'd played ... each of them was in a different band and we'd played with them. One of them was this guy Roy who played in a band called Murder Strikes Pink who were a very dour sort of punkish band sort of like Wire, a very clipped, very regimented, sparse sort of music. The other one was a guy Desmond (Brice) who'd been in a band called Hard Sums with Richard James who were like a rinky-dink pop, a kind of lo-fi pop band ... but quite charming in their way because the guy that wrote the songs, the guy called Richard James, wrote quite catchy songs. We'd played with them and they were part of ... there were a whole group of bands who played together, who knew each other and were quite supportive of each other. Anyway, they were starting a new band and they wanted me to play with them. So we started playing ... this was after the end of the Victor Dimisich Band ... and it was very loud. I just remember it being very loud and a bit chaotic after the bands I'd been playing with, which we were probably musically a lot more developed.

**Interviewer:**

And what was this incarnation?

**Peter:**

Well this became the Pin Group and they already had quite a few songs that Desmond and Roy had written, Desmond had written the lyrics and so all those songs like 'Ambivalence,' 'Colombia' and 'Coat' and that were already ...

**Interviewer:**

And you were drumming?

**Peter:**

And I was drumming yeah. Then one day ... I got quite good friends with Desmond because he was a lyricist ... we were both lyricists and there were very few lyricists around or actual lyricists rather than people who, you know, had one syllable that they repeated for most of the song. But we actually thought of ourselves as lyricists and we had quite a lot to do with each other and became quite good friends. Then one day I saw Desmond in town and said 'Oh are you coming to practice?' and he said 'No, I've been fired.' It was sort of like what? He said 'Roy fired me.' So I was a bit taken aback at this and didn't quite know what was going on and Roy said 'Oh because he kept going out of time.' That was kind of unheard of and ...

**Interviewer:**

This is Roy Montgomery?

**Peter:**

Yeah. That Roy would actually think that he could fire somebody was pretty funny. I kept

on because we got this other guy called Ross in. Desmond and I were still quite good friends and he started another band almost immediately so he wasn't too worried either because he and Roy had been friends but they'd fallen out, as you do. They got in this guy called Ross (Humphries) who I didn't know but he'd been in another band that we'd seen around and everything jelled way better. So we became the Pin Group.

**Interviewer:**

How long did that run for?

**Peter:**

Again it was ... it had a planned obsolescence too ... just a year, or maybe a little bit over a year.

**Interviewer:**

From beginning to end pretty much?

**Peter:**

Yeah, pretty much, and that was all. We played, I think, just once outside the Gladstone and so it was this very cosy scene and flourishing too. There were audiences and it's amazing that you could actually play early in the week, like on a Monday night and you played three nights which was really good too because it was great for developing ... you developed pretty quickly.

**Interviewer:**

There was enough audience for that?

**Peter:**

There was enough of an audience for that.

**Interviewer:**

Yeah that's amazing.

**Peter:**

And by the end we graduated to the end of the week. You know you've made it when you get to play on the weekend.

**Interviewer:**

And during this time you were still working as a wharfie?

**Peter:**

Yeah, all that time I was working as a wharfie.

**Interviewer:**

And writing poetry on the side?

**Peter:**

Oh, I wrote song lyrics. I never wrote poetry really. Probably after I started writing song lyrics.

**Interviewer:**

Were the lyrics that you wrote were they used for a different group or not?

**Peter:**

No. I think there were two or three.

**Interviewer:**

It was mainly Roy's material?

**Peter:**

Yeah mainly Roy's and Desmond's. Even though Desmond had gone, he'd written most of the lyrics for the Pin Group and so all those ... the best Pin Group songs ... are his lyrics actually.

**Interviewer:**

You've got recordings of all these haven't you somewhere?

**Peter:**

Well we recorded singles early on, two singles which we did at Night Shift in Christchurch. They're very rudimentary recordings and there's sort of tech stuff wrong with each one. I think we were trying to be too loud and it was just too much for his gear because we were very loud. Then for the second one we over-compensated and tried to ... so the first one was distorted and the second one was too low in volume or something. It was just a backyard studio in Christchurch. It did a lot of early stuff like the Clean's 'Tallyho.' We were, I think, the first record on Flying Nun. We knew this guy Roger Shepherd who was the manager of the record ... there was this ... it was a music shop in Christchurch called the Record Factory and he was manager of one of the branches of that shop. Roy was the manager of one of the branches of the EMI shop and they knew each other. Roger thought he'd start a record label and that was unheard of. It was kind of like 'Well what do you do to start a record label?' Nobody knew what you did. We thought you had to go through some sort of registration procedure with the Companies Act or something. But we knew a lot of the people that we liked overseas had started their own labels ... in England and that ... you know early Rough Trade and stuff like that, so it was obviously possible to do. So Roger did this weird thing of starting a label and we were the first band on his label. The Clean recorded about the same time so really those things should've come out together. We were probably just slightly before them, the 'Tallyho' song. But both our singles got into the New Zealand charts ... they got to, oh the low 30s or something in the charts because they sold only in Christchurch. By that time we'd become quite popular in Christchurch and that was kind of weird after being with the Vacuum and the Victor Dimisich Band, suddenly becoming like the flavour of the month because we coincided with a lot of English stuff like Joy Division. We used to get called 'Roy Division' ... those kind of groups in England which also were also in the New Zealand charts ... like Joy Division singles and stuff. Somehow we just coincided with that and we became very popular or kind of hip. So it was weird suddenly being a hip band after being in these other bands that I thought were a lot better and more innovative and stuff who just had had no recognition at all. So that was a kind of an odd experience and I was quite cynical, I remember, at the time about it. So we sort of got to play ... I remember we played with the Clean too. But the first, well sort of the first, version of the Clean was with, I think, Doug Hood ... it was different from the line-up that came later. They came up with the Enemy and the Enemy were one of the best, you know. The Enemy live were one of the best things I saw ... they were great ... seeing them in a hall playing 'Pull down the Shades' in the late '70s! The Enemy had a lot more tension than Toy Love. They played a bit slower and I think the bass player had a lot to do with that and Chris Knox was doing his thing. Then they played at Mollett Street and Chris Knox cut himself and when you see it the first

time it's shocking.

**Interviewer:**

It's great yeah.

**Peter:**

Everybody pinned against the back wall ... that was great! Then the Pin Group played with the Clean at the Gladstone and a lot of the Dunedin bands had started to come up to play in the early week gigs ... sort of the younger ones like the Chills, Sneaky Feelings, the Stones and the Verlaines.

**Interviewer:**

The scene was really starting to happen?

**Peter:**

Yeah it was starting to. Suddenly there were all these bands from Dunedin and the Christchurch sort-of-scene was starting to decline and ...

**Interviewer:**

Was there much exchange from Wellington and Auckland at that point?

**Peter:**

Very little actually. There was a little bit, I remember. I think Naked Spots Dance stayed with us when they came down. I remember kind of liking what they did but not totally.

**Interviewer:**

What about Shoes This High?

**Peter:**

I think they did but I'm not sure yeah.

**Interviewer:**

That's the band that was my big fave.

**Peter:**

I really liked what I've heard subsequently. I'm not sure. I think they probably played in Christchurch in that period ... I've seen them somewhere. There was a whole group of those bands too, probably not so much from Wellington. Obviously there were the bigger name Auckland bands.

**Interviewer:**

There's always been that separation of the South and North Island hasn't there?

**Peter:**

Although at that stage, as I said, a lot of Auckland bands played in Christchurch. It was funny. There was this band called Danse Macabre who came down and played at the Gladstone. Everybody laughed at them because Christchurch was just so hard-core. Something like the Pin Group had a lot less of a style sort of thing, even though I think we were in our own way pretty styley. Yeah, it was just that nobody took them seriously for being posers. The Christchurch audience was always so ... I don't know what the word is ... sort of staunch. It was a kind of an affectation too, I think.

**Interviewer:**

The rep for the Christchurch Skins started to arrive about this time didn't it?

**Peter:**

Yeah, exactly around that time.

**Interviewer:**

Yeah so the violence began to happen?

**Peter:**

Yeah. What happened was that Mollett Street stopped. I can't remember if that was because of violence or just something for other reasons but then there was a succession of other punk clubs. There was the old fire station in Sydenham for a while and we used to practice there and then there were other places. Gradually there was this whole skinhead phenomenon, mainly of guys that would just go round and bust up gigs for no reason really, just for the sake of it.

**Interviewer:**

Bored bodgies!

**Peter:**

There was just this kind of mindless violence. It became really hard to have gigs outside the controlled pub environment and then the pubs around this time ... sort of in the early '80s ... the whole pub thing began to tighten up. There had been a lot of inner-city pubs but they just weren't getting many people in ... people who lived in the suburbs probably would have gone to those pubs. So there was this whole period where they'd have bands and they'd have new young bands and stuff hoping to get an audience, but after a while that would die off. Then there was this whole kind of yuppification of the bars and the older pubs that survived generally tried to get a better class of, you know, client ... people who would pay more money for their drinks.

**Interviewer:**

Gentrification began to happen really didn't it?

**Peter:**

Yeah, just around that period. And that really affected the Christchurch music scene because from being this flourishing scene it just went dead. There were all the people of my sort of age group or a bit younger, the whole Gladstone crowd, and a lot of them got into other things like theatre and film and all that. The Free Theatre in Christchurch really flourished around that time and Bill became part of that and other people who had been involved in the music scene got into film and stuff like that. There were younger people, sort of the next lot of younger people, but they didn't seem to be so into going to see bands at pubs anyway and were perhaps doing more things at home or whatever.

**Interviewer:**

I wonder if radio began to have more of a voice at that point as well because it sort of stopped being a live thing and became perhaps turned back to radio?

**Peter:**

Student radio was quite a big thing at the time. A lot of people who I knew worked on student radio, had shows ... a lot of people in those bands had shows on student radio.

**Interviewer:**

That would have been able to keep going really?

**Peter:**

Yeah, but that also tightened up after a period when the radio stations had to make money or it depended on how much money they got from OUSA.

**Interviewer:**

Because it was the golden '80s wasn't it?

**Peter:**

Yeah. But through the '80s that declined too so then there was much less opportunity on student radio to play stuff that was sort of outside their playlist. There were specialist shows but they got more conservative, I think, over that period.

**Interviewer:**

Had you met Kim by then?

**Peter:**

No.

**Interviewer:**

Just wondered how long you guys had known each other?

**Peter:**

Not too long after that actually.

**Interviewer:**

Do you want to stop there?

**Peter:**

No it's alright. So then Pin Group finished. Roy went overseas and ... oh yeah, the Pin Group recorded two singles and a 12" EP. After we weren't very happy with the singles, the sound quality of the singles, we went to Wellington to a flash ... to the EMI studios where they had all Loxene Golden Disk awards around the walls and recorded the 12" EP, also on Flying Nun. That got a fair bit of attention too ... it had much better sound quality. After the Pin Group doing those things I was talking with Allen Meek who at that stage was playing with the Bilders and we thought it was a pity that the Victor Dimisich Band hadn't done anything, recorded anything. We decided to record some songs at a studio in Christchurch called Tandem. The sound engineer there was a guy who'd been in Heatwave who were actually ... there was a German group of Americans probably ... perhaps children of GI's or something and so it was a kind of black American German disco group.

**Interviewer:**

Yeah I thought it was disco yeah.

**Peter:**

They had hits like 'Boogie Nights,' big, big hits, but he was ... so he was working in a studio in Christchurch which is so weird and yeah but he did the engineering. We recorded the Victor Dimisich Band EP there but Tony O'Grady in the meantime had become a born-



again Christian and had sold all his music gear and all his records and didn't believe in playing un-Christian music anymore. So we got in Mary Heney who could also play guitar ... she played guitar on the Victor Dimisich Band EP. We were going to release it ourselves, actually, and then Chris Knox ... Oh, we gave a copy to Roger Shepherd but Roger didn't know what to make of it because it was just so out of time and place. It didn't match any of the current trends ... at that stage Flying Nun were releasing Dunedin bands generally with guitars ... but he gave a copy to Chris Knox and Chris Knox really loved it and he said 'You should release this' and so he did. So that came out on Flying Nun. It got quite a lot of good press but people sort of saw it as an oddity, sort of something not of its time or place. Although Hamish Kilgour said something about it ... he said it reminded him of Christchurch on a rainy day in the 1950s, a snapshot of Christchurch on a rainy day in the 1950s!

**Interviewer:**

That's interesting.

**Peter:**

Yeah ... which I thought was pretty good and there was something of that about it. So we did that.

**Interviewer:**

Yes I'd like to hear that. I haven't heard that, I'd be very interested at some point.

**Peter:**

I keep getting pestered by Chris Moon to do a re-issue because I did the Medication re-issue but then they all got burnt up. After that, I just thought it's not meant to be out there ... it shouldn't be out there!

**Interviewer:**

There might have been other reasons for the fire. I know exactly what you mean though yeah, yeah.

**Peter:**

Yeah so ...

**Interviewer:**

You released that and then?

**Peter:**

Oh yeah. Then I got a phone call from these guys ... it was either Mick or ... there was this band called Drowning is Easy. They were all English immigrants. They'd come out here sort of when they were 12 but they were young, they were much younger than us, and they played. They weren't old enough to get into the Gladstone. That's right, they used to hang around outside and occasionally Rose would let them in towards the end of the night. I remember the last time the Pin Group played we insisted that they be allowed in because we thought they were quite ... we knew their band was quite funny. They had a weird kind of jokey punk band, sort of like the TV Personalities or something like that and they had these recrimination songs about everybody. They were hilarious and they were pretty good, sort of punk/ pop, with these just hilarious lyrics. They had this great song called 'Spoons for Christ' I remember that the drummer sang and it had all these outlandish lines in it and they had another song called 'Arson' which was also great. Anyway one of them rang me up and said 'Do you want to play, we're starting a new band?' or something. So I

started playing with them and I said 'Is it okay if Mary plays too?' So it was Mary and me and Mick and a guy who was called Chauvin. His real name was Ian but Desmond gave all these people names and he became Andre Chauvin 'the Urban Guerilla' because he'd done this robbery of a brewery. He and two other guys had robbed the brewery in Christchurch and got away with all these crates of beer. They got caught of course and he got community service or something but he became Andre Chauvin the urban Guerilla. So he was just called Chauve.

**Interviewer:**

What was Mick's last name?

**Peter:**

Well his stage name ... he became Mick Elborado. That was his name because all these guys had these names. I think there was an English band called the Swell Maps ... who I actually like a lot ... who had the same thing ... Epic Soundtracks and Nicky Sudden weren't their real names. They were very much like those guys, a whimsical English kind of music.

**Interviewer:**

I'm just asking for the sake of the written, when it's in writing people won't know who Mick is, so it's good to have those sorts of details. And Mary's last name?

**Peter:**

Mary Heney. Susan and Mary were both in 25 Cents. I had a relationship with Susan and ...

**Interviewer:**

And what was her last name?

**Peter:**

Heney ... they were sisters.

**Interviewer:**

Were you still with Susan when you started to join up with these guys?

**Peter:**

No.

**Interviewer:**

But you were still playing with Mary?

**Peter:**

Well we started playing together. So there were the four of us and we used to play in the back of my flat in Spreydon in Christchurch and there was this guy ... there was a block of pensioner flats down the back, over the back fence. We used to practice every Saturday afternoon and the police would turn up and they were often quite apologetic ... it was obviously something they couldn't really be bothered with ... but there was some guy in this block of flats who used to ring the police

**Interviewer:**

As soon as you started playing?

**Peter:**

As soon as we started playing ... so we used to call him 'shell shock' because he told the cops this story about how he'd been in the war and everything. We just referred to him as 'Shell Shock.' Then one day my partner at the time, Cathy, said 'Look there's something happening down the back, it's on fire!' and there were smoke and flames coming out of one of these pensioner flats. It was that guy's flat. He got out ... I don't know if he'd fallen asleep with a cigarette or something. But it wasn't on the end, it was in the middle, and somebody said we should become the Scorched Earth Policy ... we became Scorched Earth Policy.

**Interviewer:**

That's how the name came, that's great.

**Peter:**

It wasn't directly attributed to that but it sort of coincided when we were playing. Ian had some songs and they went on and on. I remember we did a couple of covers. Then one day Ian turned up without his ... he used to come around on a kind of moped or small motor-bike ... then one day he turned up and he used to bring his amp and his guitar on this motorbike.

**Interviewer:**

Mopeds were a lot more robust in those days!

**Peter:**

Yeah! Then he turned up one day without them and we said 'Where's your gear?' and he said 'Oh I'm leaving.' So he left. I think he was intimidated by Mary and me ... that's what I could work out from talking with Mick and other people afterwards ... that we were sort of pushing the band in a direction that he didn't want to go. Then we got in Brian and Andrew

**Interviewer:**

Can you give the last names?

**Peter:**

Brian Crook and Andrew Dawson ... again through my brother. Andrew's claim to fame was that he was very good at getting cactus, which we were into at the time. People would go round Christchurch and cut down cacti from people's gardens and steal them. Actually I remember in the Vacuum period, the late Vacuum period, we went up to Blenheim to play with Bill and we cut down a cactus from the middle of the town square and took it back, trying to wrap it up and trying to carry it. It was a great San Pedro which lasted us for a long time and it was just much better hallucinations than any paper trips that we were used to ... not prolifically ... but some people we knew were sort of prolific cactus people.

**Interviewer:**

What era is this? Is it like '84?

**Peter:**

Early '80s yeah, sort of '82/'83 ... sort of round there. Scorched Earth started in '82, I think. Anyway that was Andrew's claim to fame and the other thing was that he'd auditioned for one of Desmond's groups ... which is weird ... again that thing of auditioning for a group. Because he was a friend of my brother's I went out there too. We went out to support him,

to North Beach, to this bach by the sea. We thought Andrew's voice sounded like a megaphone even though he actually wasn't singing through a megaphone. We were fascinated. He didn't get the job because they wanted somebody a little more professional, but he was obviously a singer and he looked like a singer! So that was good. He flatted in this place in Knowles Street which was a large sort of artists' house. There were probably ... I don't know ... maybe eight people in the house, two stories, a big place and it had a whole history. Margaret Mahy had flatted there and one of her daughters was there over that time, so it had a whole history of successive generations. There were a lot of filmmakers, mainly film people there and Brian Crook who was an art student. What I'd heard about him was that he was this big tall guy who had to stoop when he went through doorways and that when he played guitar he got very intense and he used to spit

**Interviewer:**

Spit unintentionally or spit intentionally?

**Peter:**

Unintentionally! That also seemed like a fascinating recommendation. So we got in these two guys ... neither of them had been in a band before ... we had this weird collection of people and it was sort of like 'What do we do now?' I tried to drag out some of the old Victor Dimisich ... a lot of the Victor Dimisich songs that had never been played and I got Stephen to put them down on a tape, but nobody could work them out. They were these kind of versions of them. But then gradually we started to write a few of our own songs and Brian I think, sort of gradually. First of all we'd have ... because I had lyrics, plenty of lyrics, that wasn't a problem. The problem was getting some sort of music for them. First of all, I think, the whole band tried to work out things together and then gradually Brian became the main writer of music and you know quite quickly it became really good. But the whole Scorched Earth thing was this kind of motley collection of just completely different people and there was Andrew singing or sort of singing, vocally declaiming in a Mark E. Smith sort of style. Mark E. Smith was quite an influence.

**Interviewer:**

At that point?

**Peter:**

Because I always loved the Fall and that was something we had in common between all of us, actually. There were Brian and Mary playing guitars. I think Mary played keyboards sometimes and Mick played bass and we made this giant cacophony which was pretty un-together. Quite quickly, I think, we played live too and there were these tremendously chaotic gigs. We played at an art opening in a building somewhere in Christchurch, on or about the third or fourth storey in one of those buildings around the Square. It was an exhibition by two people who we knew and we just played this ... it must have been quite frightening I think ... performance in the gallery, in a reasonably small room with a lot of people. I think we pinned them against the back wall. Andrew of course was another person who liked to advance into the audience and all that and I remember that was a very wild kind of opening with people hanging off this building, literally hanging off the edge of the building, and everybody completely out of it. A lot of Scorched Earth gigs were like that and the music was really un-together and it was very loud.

**Interviewer:**

But quite enjoyable from the sounds of it?

**Peter:**

Yeah. It's sort of fascinating because we had such an odd group of influences We did a lot of ... I really liked '60s garage band stuff like the 'Nuggets' things, things like the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators especially, and we did a lot of covers of those songs. We did some punkish sort of covers. We did a couple of Swell Maps songs ... we did 'Forest Fire' and something else by Swell Maps and we did 'I'm Insanely Jealous of You by the Soft Boys and things like that. So we did a heap of ... just this whole collection of covers.

**Interviewer:**

Quite eclectic though.

**Peter:**

Covers that we didn't know very well. So 'Oh we'll just play this' and we didn't care and the whole thing about Scorched Earth compared with those other bands is that it was much more irreverent, coming from a trash aesthetic like the Cramps and the Gun Club and all that stuff. It was completely irreverent and sort of trashing things although gradually we started writing our own songs within the band.

**Interviewer:**

How long did it take to get to that point?

**Peter:**

We had a few from early on. I think we did our first EP in '85 ... two or three years by the time we had ... we still did quite a bit of Victor Dimisich ... we did 'Mekong Delta Blues' and stuff like that and some of the other Victor Dimisich songs.

**Interviewer:**

So music was still very much the force in your life wasn't it at this and the wharfie stuff was still going?

**Peter:**

Which other people found really odd ... oh yeah, and because I played rugby league too. I played premier grade rugby league in Christchurch after I left school for about five years or something. Then I had to make a decision and I'd had a few concussions because I could run quite quickly but I was never quite big enough for that and I had to decide whether I actually wanted to do that. But that was totally odd among people in the music scene who were coming from quite different backgrounds.

**Interviewer:**

Yes totally. It was really uncool wasn't it to play sport?

**Peter:**

I enjoyed playing rugby league, which was a reaction to being forced to play rugby at school, and playing in a team who were mainly Pacific Islanders. I was usually the only 'palangi' in the back line so that was quite good. I actually enjoyed it and it was fun but it was sort of this odd other life, I suppose.

**Interviewer:**

But sorry ... back to the Scorched Earth Policy ... how long were you together all together?

**Peter:**

Probably about four years ... definitely four years ... it was '82 to '86.

**Interviewer:**

It was pretty comprehensive by then wasn't it?

**Peter:**

Yeah. Scorched Earth eventually got very good at what we did and we sort of synthesised all our various diverse influences and had a sound of our own. We were unlike anything else around. We were probably more like some Australian ... I used to go over to Sydney quite a lot in the 80s because I had a lot of friends over there. A lot of my friends from the late '70s period in Christchurch went to Sydney. There was this whole migration, which is quite odd, but it seemed to be the thing you did at the time.

**Interviewer:**

Are they still there now?

**Peter:**

Some of them are yeah. Completely assimilated. There were a lot of trashy Australian groups doing that kind of thing but none in New Zealand so it was much more a sun and drugs and stuff kind of thing, it definitely wasn't a Christchurch thing or Dunedin for that matter. So we were way out of synch with anything else that was happening in Christchurch and we got quite a lot of shit from other people because at that stage there was the style thing, the rooster heads and the New Romantics.

**Interviewer:**

And mod stuff had just sort of ...

**Peter:**

Yeah. The '80s sort of English styles and Christchurch was always very Anglophile, incredibly that way. It was like the *NME* was the bible and we got a lot of shit from those people and in a way I suppose we were sort of thumbing our nose at them by doing what we did.

**Interviewer:**

And did Flying Nun take an interest in you both?

**Peter:**

Sort of ... I don't think Roger knew what to make of us because I think Roger depended on other people telling him what to do but Hamish Kilgour was working for them in Christchurch at the time and he liked us. He sort of advocated on our behalf so we got to release two 12" EP's ... which everybody used to do at the time because we thought they were louder and better at 45 ... on Flying Nun. We never really got much recognition in New Zealand and it was only after we'd broken up that I went up to the Flying Nun office one day and Gary Cope said 'Oh, there's these overseas reviews of you guys here' or something, just by the way. There were a number of American reviews that seemed to understand what we were doing much better than anyone in New Zealand. But that sort of feeds into the whole thing with Bruce and Expressway ... it's associated with that.

**Interviewer:**

That was happening round the same time was it?

**Peter:**

Yeah.

**Interviewer:**

Had you met Bruce by then?

**Peter:**

No.

**Interviewer:**

You were probably running like parallel in lots of ways?

**Peter:**

Yeah, he's a bit younger than I am and he liked the Bats before Scorched Earth. The other thing was gradually there was nowhere we could play in Christchurch. We couldn't play in the pubs ... the pubs had become very sewn up ... they wanted what they thought of as professional bands. A lot of pubs didn't have music anymore ... the whole gentrification of the inner city. There was nowhere to play so we went back to the thing of hiring our own halls and playing there and we had some great gigs in halls where we got a bunch of bands and we started using film too ... which is another thing. I remember going and hiring a bunch of horror movies from some backyard place ... it's puzzled me ever since how somebody had all these cult horror movies, like B-grade horrors, in the back yard ... but anyway I remember going and getting them.

**Interviewer:**

Was it like a 16mm thing with old projectors?

**Peter:**

They must have been on videotape, I think, or did we project them? We must have projected them. Yeah, it must have been projectors because that's sort of the early '80s. But that was quite good and there was still that alternative and reasonably early on we went down to Dunedin. There was some festival on the peninsula, called the Broom Valley Festival and Scorched Earth went down in a house-truck ... somebody we knew had a house truck ... and that was pretty wild, that whole trip. We played at this festival in the open air with another Christchurch group we went down with called Toerag, who were a trio, a kind of punkish trio. We played at the Empire the night after, on the Saturday night, to maybe a dozen people. But gradually we started going back here and we got a much better reception in Dunedin. We started to build up an audience there, quite a reasonably sized audience, at a time when we didn't have one in Christchurch. We became much more popular there than we were in Christchurch. Dunedin was quite interesting because it was like one audience, whereas Christchurch was much more fragmented, so the same people would go and see a more eclectic range of stuff whether they liked it or not. I think the Empire people just went there anyway, like the Gladstone had been a few years before in Christchurch. So there were these ... the whole history of Scorched Earth was pretty debauched really, there were a lot of drugs and drinking and stuff ... but gradually it became much more musical. Then Andrew left ... well we started improvising a lot more at practices. By that time we'd started getting into long improvisations at practices and that was mainly Brian, Mick and me. Mary didn't want to do any stuff like that ... she just wanted to play songs ... and there was nothing for Andrew to do, being a singer. So he'd go outside and smoke cigarettes or something and gradually ... I think he just increasingly felt redundant. I sort of tried to get him to play instruments but he wasn't that into it, being a front person. So we started just doing a lot of ... we had some things that were improvised and parts of songs that were improvised ... but still it was mainly quite short

songs. Then we got in Andrea from the World ... the World were a great Christchurch group that've been just completely forgotten about. This was Allen Meek who'd been in the Bilders, who by this time had broken up, and the Victor Dimisich Band and three other people. There was Andrea Cocks, who joined Scorched Earth and there was Bridget Mulcahy ... you probably notice a lot of Irish names in there ... It was a sort of an Irish Catholic thing ... which is my background too ... and the Victor Dimisich Band had that, not Stephen but the others and Theresa Maguire.

**Interviewer:**

You kind of hung out with those sorts of people?

**Peter:**

Yeah, through people who knew people and stuff like that ... Bridget and Malcolm Grant who'd been drumming for the World and they had a guy called Charles who looked like his name! He was a suave lead singer in the later Bryan Ferry mould. But they were great ... they were like an edgier version of the early Talking Heads, that sort of thing. We used to play together and then they broke up. Andrea joined Scorched Earth and that was a great period musically for us after the first EP ... she was on the first EP but it was sort of in between them that we developed musically, with Andrew gone and less of that kind of excess, all that stuff. It was a much more musical period and Brian, mainly Brian and I, were writing songs together so we developed a lot over that period and we sort of ... I think we had our own sound and did another EP.

**Interviewer:**

Through Flying Nun again?

**Peter:**

Yeah. And then eventually we got to, right at the end ... I think our last performance or second to last performance was in 1986. I think it was at the Gladstone one weekend ... we finally had a big crowd in Christchurch! We broke up then after being kind of unappreciated in Christchurch. What came after was a review of our second EP in the *Listener* that was very complimentary about it.

**Interviewer:**

They understood it.

**Peter:**

Finally. This had always been a problem because the lyrics were mostly black humour and the whole thing about Scorched Earth wasn't that serious and the reviewer got it because we'd had a lot of reviews that we were about doom and gloom and stuff like this which was kind of puzzling. People just didn't get the ... and she said about the black humour in the lyrics and stuff like this and then

**Interviewer:**

Suddenly you got popular for that reason?

**Peter:**

Yeah and we broke up then. We played a last performance in a record shop in Christchurch with Mick playing a casiotone and we did 'Born to Be Wild' because Mary said that was the first song she'd ever learnt on guitar.

**Interviewer:**



Nice finish. And the reason you broke up was because?

**Peter:**

Well actually Mick left, Mick's very volatile and he sort of goes from being quite manic to quite depressed. Always on that kind of continuum, I suppose. And he left once and he was briefly replaced by a guy called Campbell McLay who had an interesting tape label in Christchurch called Onset Offset that released a whole lot of really obscure stuff, the sort of other Christchurch, over that period, on cassette.

**Interviewer:**

No-one's sort of got any work of that or just a different sort of scene?

**Peter:**

It's never been reissued in any other form. I don't know about that. It was a whole lot of people who became well-known or in other groups and stuff and other people that you've just never heard of anything since.

**Interviewer:**

Yeah it's funny isn't it?

**Peter:**

Not necessarily the best or the worst you know.

**Interviewer:**

Well often it's when people don't continue in the same mode.

**Peter:**

It is yeah.

**Interviewer:**

There's a consistency then you just have to keep remembering.

**Peter:**

Yeah and then people ... there's a retrospective thing then, But anyway Campbell played with us for a short time and then just before we were to record our second EP Mick, who was out of the band at that time, got a telegram from Campbell saying 'Would you please lend bass-lines to Scorched Earth as I won't be.' You know what a telegram was like. And so Mick came back but then at the end he left again.

**Interviewer:**

That was kind of the end of it really?

**Peter:**

Yeah.

**Interviewer:**

That might be a good place to stop?

## **Part 5 – 27 September**

**Interviewer:**

The last EP of Scorched Earth, there was a couple of people that ...

**Peter:**

No, that was the EP by the Pin Group.

**Interviewer:**

Oh the Pin Group, sorry, that's quite true.

**Peter:**

I'd forgotten that actually Mary Heney from 25 Cents who was in Scorched Earth and Peter Fryer, 'the Bod' who had been in the early Vacuum both played in probably the last two or three live performances of the Pin Group and on the EP which gave us a much fuller sound. Mary gave us a really good option of ... she and Ross did backing vocals really well. It was quite interesting actually when we were doing the EP we worked out that Mary's voice was lower than Ross's, or their best voices, so they sort of reversed the usual male/female thing of backing vocal harmonies.

**Interviewer:**

Right so they're really important figures actually in that?

**Peter:**

Yeah but it was actually the first time we'd really tried anything like that sophisticated ... you're doing actual vocal harmonies! But yeah Mary's voice was a good addition in that.

**Interviewer:**

What we might do actually is when it's transcribed I might just make sure that that's put into that.

**Peter:**

Scorched Earth had disintegrated and I think about that time I'd been really keen to get Stephen Cogle playing again because after the Victor Dimicich band Stephen had gone to the sort of ... the story was that he'd gone to play golf ... he'd given up music to play golf. I think that was only partially true because I talked to his partner Carol one time and said about it and she said 'Oh he still plays guitar at home.'

**Interviewer:**

That's a great substitute for music!

**Peter:**

Yeah, you sort of think what have they got in common! And he was sort of reluctant but we started having a few sessions I think first with Brian, maybe Mick too and Stephen and I and then with Ross who had been in the Pin Group ... so many of the same people were recurring, wanting to play with Stephen, so we had a kind of proto-Terminals.

**Interviewer:**

Would you say that you guys were quite well respected by this point?

**Peter:**

I think we had the history thing with the Pin Group but I'm not sure how much, I suppose we were and I think we did find that with the early Terminals that we didn't have to sort of convince people or anything, that there was already a bit of a following because we'd been in other bands and Ross around the same time was in The Great Unwashed who were a reasonably well-known group too.

**Interviewer:**

And you were starting to get an international following as well by this point?

**Peter:**

Not that we knew of! There were those reviews of Scorched Earth Policy in American magazines like *Forced Exposure*, those kind of things. It was about this time the Terminals ... the first version of the Terminals ... Brian didn't play with us. He was playing with his partner Maryrose, who was Maryrose Wilkinson and became Maryrose Crook, and Rebecca Shanahan and Robbie Stowell in a group called Max Block who were really good and again in a kind of edgy ... I don't know ... post-punk? ... sort of style. They were quite ... I think they were a bit like a no-wave group in a way, again outside what was happening in Christchurch or New Zealand even, stylistically. They started to play about the same time as the Terminals ... we had Susan Heney, Mary's sister, who had been in 25 Cents ... Susan, Ross, Mick Elborado, Stephen and myself ... Stephen Cogle and myself ... and we started to play. I think the first time we played was at the Flying Nun Christmas party in '86 so it must have been Christmas '86 in a warehouse space and Max Block played too. There were other people as well. The second night we played at this place called the Youth Centre which had been a Cinerama theatre. There was this large space that nobody knew what to do with and it became a sort of successively various, a kind of youth/drop-in centre type place. It had a basketball court so you were playing on quite a high stage with this large basketball court in front of you and this large very big reverb so you could just sound massive playing there. We played there to a very small number of people but one of the few people was ... I later found out ... was Bruce Russell and he'd been at the Flying Nun Christmas party the night before too. I remember seeing this guy and he had long sideburns and I remember thinking what a poser! Anyway, I didn't know him at the time but he was there and it turned out that he'd actually wanted a Scorched Earth Policy tape of live stuff. I think it was either Scorched Earth Policy or the Victor Dimisich Band. I think we did both, but on cassette and just for ourselves. And he'd written to me for one and sent money and never received it, but I don't remember ever receiving it!

**Interviewer:**

Good start anyway!

**Peter:**

Yeah! So shortly afterwards we got ... I think Bob Scott was organising gigs at Chippendale house in Dunedin and he wanted to get us down there ... the Terminals ... and we went down. He said 'there's this new band, they're pretty weird' or something like that and it was the Dead C. So the Dead C played with us at Chippendale House. It was probably winter ... it always seemed to be winter when we went to Dunedin! I remember there were people huddled round this fire, a pot-belly or something in the middle of quite a large warehouse space and it was freezing. But the gig was really good and both bands played very well and I remember being quite interested in the Dead C. I thought they were like a slow punk band. They were still doing sort of more identifiable songs. I remember they did 'Bad Politics' with Bruce doing the vocal and I remember Susan and I went outside and had a smoke and came back in and they were just in the middle of their thing.

I remember they were ... I thought they were really good. But other people in my band didn't think that much of them so there was definitely a kind of ... a bit of a division there because I don't think other people could quite work them out. Definitely the Dunedin people couldn't quite work them out either ... the Flying Nun people ... and I know when they came up to Christchurch there was quite a lot of antipathy particularly from Flying Nun people. I remember having an argument ... perhaps with Roger Shepherd or Gary Cope or somebody at Flying Nun about what the Dead C were doing and one of these people thought they were a joke on music. So they thought they were like a send up band, which is an interesting sort of take on it.

**Interviewer:**

And possibly at times they might have been too?

**Peter:**

I think so. There was a bit of that ... but then you think of anything, like any punk thing.

**Interviewer:**

That's right and it's always tongue-in-cheek.

**Peter:**

Just sort of upsetting conventions and I think the Flying Nun thing at that stage had become very conventional. In fact in Christchurch ... again a bit of Christchurch versus sort of Dunedin thing ... we actually always thought that Flying Nun was very retro. We liked it but we thought it was very much derived from the mid-'60s stuff like the Byrds and the Beatles and that was fine, that was good, but I remember yeah there was quite a difference. Christchurch bands tended to be edgier and darker. The notable one was the Gordons who came up in the early '80s before that ... so probably in the period when I was in the Victor Dimisich Band ... no, the Vacuum ... the late '70s early '80s. They were incredibly intense live and just seeing them ... they were very loud and I remember the floor of the Gladstone shaking. It was a wooden dance-floor, sort of, and skinheads were putting their heads in the speakers and stuff like that.

**Interviewer:**

I did that myself. I'm permanently deaf from there on in!

**Peter:**

Our band ... so bands like Scorched Earth Policy and that ... there was something a lot more, for want of a better word, sort of punk than probably the Dunedin bands. Although there were more punkish bands, like probably the Enemy were the earliest ones who had that same thing.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think Flying Nun almost created that?

**Peter:**

I think they did, not deliberately though. I think what happened was there was the Clean and then there was a grouping of those ... was it the four bands on the Dunedin EP? I think then they got lumped together, especially those four ... the Chills, Sneaky Feelings, the Verlaines and the Stones.

**Interviewer:**

The Dunedin sound got created that way. It's clearly not the case now is it?

**Peter:**

No. But then the Dunedin sound became known as the New Zealand sound in some American magazines. So yeah, I don't know if they created it but I think definitely once they realised what they had, it became very closely identified with the Flying Nun sound. Even to this day you get the Flying Nun sound, people described as that.

**Interviewer:**

Which you guys certainly didn't fit into?

**Peter:**

And we never fitted into it ... which was kind of weird. We were these weird outsiders.

**Interviewer:**

What era are we talking here now?

**Peter:**

Sort of '87. Getting towards the late '80s. The Terminals played quite a lot ... we used to get quite good audiences because we already had that track record for want of a better thing. It was quite good. We did two ... we did a 12" EP called 'Disconnect' with Flying Nun, which doesn't sound very good. The songs, I think, are quite good but it just wasn't very well recorded.

**Interviewer:**

And this was still very much a song-based period wasn't it?

**Peter:**

Yes, definitely. Although it was very much song-based, the Terminal sound live was still quite a large sound and quite a ... it wasn't poppy even though some of the songs on the albums are poppy.

**Interviewer:**

It's quite dark, but still humorous?

**Peter:**

Yeah there's some ... there's still some of the black humour thing there in the lyrics. Not as much as Scorched Earth but some of that yeah. And we did an LP at Writhe Studios in Wellington ... an LP called 'Uncoffined' with Brent McLaughlin from the Gordons engineering. That went really well ... we were quite pleased with that. We used to ... we had several trips to Wellington to do it. That was recorded about 1988, I think, and it was probably the last thing with Ross in the band. Ross left after that. We had ... I'm not quite sure why he left but I think he wanted to do ... he had a totally different idea of music from mine and I remember we had kind of bitter arguments. He thought ... I remember him saying to me that at my age, which was like my early 30s, he'd hate to be still doing original music. He thought that beyond your early 20s that you should just play covers that everybody knew, that the role of music was entertainment.

**Interviewer:**

That's interesting.

**Peter:**

And subsequently he got into a series of cover bands. They were actually quite good cover

bands ... there were the After Dinner Mints, then there were two or three different versions and then there were the Trillionaires who all played covers of '60s and '70s songs. That's really what he wanted to do. So he had this real ... I don't know quite what it was. It was quite odd ... we thought it was quite odd.

**Interviewer:**

Still at least he got happy.

**Peter:**

I don't know if he was ever happy. He was actually very style-oriented too because he was quite into the way bands looked and tried to get us to do things which everybody just refused point blank. Like one of them was to wear Chinese army-like clothes, military uniforms or something, and I remember in the Pin Group sometimes he used to wear a cross and things like this. After a while I think we just rolled our eyes a bit and took no notice of him but he was a good musician. He was a really good musician but he wasn't really ... I don't think he had any kind of idea of originality.

**Interviewer:**

Or clearly yeah.

**Peter:**

Not high in his reasons for playing music! So he left and we continued as a four piece and then after a while Susan left. We needed some more people and by that time Brian and Maryrose ... who played in Max Block ... they'd moved to Australia to Sydney and still continued with Max Block in Sydney. The other two moved over there too so all four of them were over there, not quite at the same time. I remember going to Sydney and seeing them play and that was really soul-destroying. They were playing at some large multi-storey ... it wasn't a Leagues club ... I think it was the Trade Union club actually, just a multi-storey building with various floors with different sorts of entertainment and the pokies. They were playing in a part of one of the floors. There was a performance space with a stage and the other half was all pokies ... there was a sort of division but not a complete division between them. And they had an Oz-rock mixer and Oz-rock mixers generally whack up the snare drum and have very loud guitars. Rebecca the drummer for Max Block seldom played on the snare anyway. She was left-handed and she played mainly on the tom-toms like Maureen Tucker and this guy couldn't work her out. He whacked up the snare and he was just destroying them really and they played ... and despite all this they played very well to a small number of people. It was kind of an ... just talking to them that was their kind of usual experience in Sydney apart from when I think they played once with a touring New Zealand band and they got a good crowd, probably of New Zealanders.

**Interviewer:**

They hadn't started the Renderers by then?

**Peter:**

No. They broke up Max Block and Brian and Rose started writing country songs in their flat in Glebe in Sydney, not going out, just writing country songs for some reason ... alienation or something. And so they came back to New Zealand about 1990 or '89/'90 and wanting to play country music and they started the Renderers. They both also played in the Terminals for a period, for maybe ... I think Maryrose played for about six months or something but I think she found it quite difficult to play. She was playing bass and she hadn't really played much bass and Terminals' songs are not that easy to play, a lot of things that Stephen wrote were reasonably complicated. I remember she found it quite

difficult. So she left but Brian stayed and we got in John Chrisstoffels to play bass who'd done the video ... we'd done two or three videos by then ... I think we did one for 'Uncoffined' which is now on that Flying Nun compilation. He was a filmmaker and he'd done the video.

**Interviewer:**

And you still had this interest as well running parallel?

**Peter:**

Yeah, I really liked film. Actually Roy and I had a lot in common. Roy was into film too. I used to see him at the Film Society and he was quite into film. So John joined the Terminals and from about 1990 we had what is the current line up of the Terminals.

**Interviewer:**

The Terminals show that you did in Auckland with Maryrose, that's pretty unusual for her to be playing with you guys wasn't it?

**Peter:**

No she never played with us in Auckland.

**Interviewer:**

Wasn't she singing with you or was that just ...

**Peter:**

Oh yeah, she was doing some backing vocals ... yeah that was last year or two years ago. No she's done that from time to time. Because quite often we played in either ... sometimes we played with the Renderers, sometimes Maryrose has played solo before us or Brian and Maryrose have played as a duo and she's done backing vocals with us. And about that time ... just going back to ... we'd played in Dunedin quite a bit and it was quite established by then. After playing with the Dead C we got on quite well ... I did mainly ... and had quite a lot to do with Bruce Russell. He had this label ... he started up this label called Xpressway, which was a tape cassette label, and he wanted to do something ... perhaps by the Victor Dimisich Band? I can't remember which was first ... they did release tapes by both the Victor Dimisich Band and Scorched Earth Policy ... sort of archival stuff of South Island music. He'd already done Alistair Galbraith, the Dead C, and Sandra Bell and who else? There were some others but I'm not sure if they'd done them at that stage ... like Trash and people like that. There were these great ... they had Xpressway evenings. We came down for two or three of them at Alistair Galbraith's warehouse in Stafford Street. That was that same Dunedin experience ... you came down and it was freezing cold in this warehouse space ... and all the Dunedin people are wearing coats, which they seem to wear all the time, and they don't seem to worry about it. We were all standing round shivering and there are bits of seaweed hanging from the rafters and then there's a big bowl of cactus or something. But the music was just so good and we actually ... by that time I think we were becoming increasingly alienated from Flying Nun because we'd recorded 'Uncoffined' in 1988 and I think about that time they moved to Auckland maybe ... I'm not quite sure of the exact sequence.

**Interviewer:**

It suddenly became a bit more corporate didn't it?

**Peter:**

Yeah it seemed like that. It was just symbolic, I suppose, but they were definitely putting a

lot of money into a few groups ... you know not many ... but in the hope that one of them would make it big and that kind of trickle down thing which seemed to be very similar ... to us anyway ... we thought it was very similar to the economics of the time, Rogernomics and all that. We didn't go along with it at all and felt much more at home with the Xpressway people who were mainly people who had fallen out with Flying Nun anyway, definitely Alastair and the Dead C. There were other people like ... Shane Carter used to play in various groups and Plagal Grind. Peter Jefferies was in Plagal Grind but he also did some amazing solo stuff and Xpressway was releasing all these people that were ... who had been on Flying Nun and were no longer on Flying Nun ... perhaps due to Flying Nun's new direction or perhaps just that there'd been some kind of mutual parting ... and our album still hadn't come out two years later and we were kind of pissed off about that. We thought that was a bit too long ... we were kind of prepared for about a year's wait but it was just getting too much and with other annoying things and Flying Nun wouldn't tell us why. So there'd be this kind of fobbing off, which I know really irritated me, because I was the one that generally dealt with them and just got really pissed off with it. It turned out later of course, there'd been a whole lot of financial difficulties ... maybe to do with the Fall record and stuff like that but they never ... if they'd actually said something about that, we would have probably given them a lot more slack.

**Interviewer:**

In some ways it was quite a good thing that it all kind of split off like that, it created a whole new culture, which was very essential.

**Peter:**

Yeah, I think you're totally right there. We felt miles more at home on Xpressway, with the Xpressway people, and the other ... it was very eclectic too if you think from the Dead C through to Alastair or Peter Jefferies or Sandra doing I guess folk ... well with Alastair and Sandra doing folk-derived stuff. So it was quite a ... it's sort of closer to the outsider 60s things in a way and I know Bruce somewhere said something about that it was the ESP catalogue type thing ... you could kind of see that there was an outsider aesthetic which people had in common ... generally an un-commercial thing whatever type of music they were playing.

**Interviewer:**

And it was entirely uncontrived, unlike today possibly?

**Peter:**

Yeah you can't reproduce those kinds of things, they've got to come naturally.

**Interviewer:**

And by this time there was some international standing wasn't there?

**Peter:**

Yeah. That was the other thing. Bruce had also worked for Flying Nun and they had been quite disinterested ... it was like that thing of us getting the Scorched Earth reviews after we'd broken up ... they hadn't taken much notice of a lot of the correspondence they got from overseas and not really picked up that there was actually quite a lot of interest, especially in the States but in different places overseas.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think that's because they wanted to encourage what they wanted to encourage rather than ...



**Peter:**

I think so. I think they probably thought it was not worth following up because they were interested in bigger things. If they got interest from say ... I don't know ... maybe a distribution deal with a major American label or something that would have been interesting. But I think to them at that stage ... they were thinking big ... it was that these people were small-fry ... like the *Forced Exposure* people and that kind of thing. And so the whole Xpressway thing became quite closely associated with a whole similar American underground that came up at the same time ... probably to do with a number of American labels, small American labels, just a little bit later ... but definitely quite a few fans in magazines and artists ... you know there's a sort of common thing and so there began to be quite a bit of contact.

**Interviewer:**

*Was Opproprium?*

**Peter:**

A little bit later.

**Interviewer:**

So do you think it came out of that time?

**Peter:**

Nick was quite a bit younger so it was the mid-'90s I think. Probably he was very influenced or quite taken with that. He was quite young ... I remember he came down to interview Kim and me... I think when we first moved to Purakaunui, probably about '93, and he was living in Wellington at the time. He would have been 17 or something like that, so sort of the same thing but a bit further on. There was quite a lot of contact and we recorded a single for Xpressway and we did the *Terminals* live tape. They were still doing mainly cassettes but they were starting to do vinyl and we recorded a single 'Do the Void'/'Deadly Tango' with Peter Jefferies engineering and that was an ordeal. Working with Peter Jefferies is an ordeal! I actually remember staying at Grey Street in Port Chalmers where Michael and Bruce lived and Peter was there doing his album ... it was 'The Last Great Challenge in a Dull World' album ... and again it was freezing cold because they couldn't use the fires and there was one heater in the kitchen and Peter was there just working on his album. It was like a monastery or something and that was Peter's attitude too, so working with him doing that single was difficult and having a few things to do with Peter in the studio then and subsequently ... he would at times throw tantrums and stuff, which was also difficult. Everybody else would leave the room and leave Peter until he cooled down! But anyway it turned out alright and it was one of a group of Xpressway singles that got quite a bit of attention, mainly in the States but also in parts of Europe, especially Germany.

**Interviewer:**

But you never travelled or anything did you at that point?

**Peter:**

No. I think at that point the only people who did ... or it may have been a little bit later ... Alastair and Peter Jefferies did a tour of the States. Have you seen that film?

**Interviewer:**

No I haven't but I've heard about it yeah.

**Peter:**

It might have been a little bit later, I think it was difficult for Alastair because he wasn't well a lot of the time but Peter's head sort of swelled as the tour went on, I think. I'm not quite sure ... I suspect that was two or three years later. We played at those Xpressway evenings, which were great musical evenings with all the other stuff ... but then they became too popular so Bruce stopped them.

**Interviewer:**

As he does!

**Peter:**

Which I thought sort of summed up the whole thing, for us as well as them. That was fine but the Terminals started getting noisier and noisier with that group ... with Brian ... especially because of Brian! ... like in, especially in the later Scorched Earth Policy when we were increasingly getting into sort of improvisational noise stuff that we didn't do much live but that's what we did at practices, just became us improvising and probably if we'd continued we would have got into that sort of, I suppose somebody like Sonic Youth were doing it at the same time with that combination of some songs but also with a noise element. But anyway the Terminals increasingly got more into that and Mick just suddenly one day ... he'd been playing an organ ... suddenly gave up playing the organ and said from now on he was going to play a synthesiser and so he had this old ... it was a mini-Moog or something ... synthesiser that had great animalistic kind of sounds. It was an amazing instrument that one. And so suddenly we had a synthesiser and Brian and I really loved Pere Ubu, and Mick too actually, and so I think we increasingly got quite Ubuish and there was a whole kind of noise element. So that whole period ... that was a really good period for the Terminals because we practised every week at my house in Sydenham in Christchurch. Actually we had this neighbour ... in retrospect I sort of feel sorry for these neighbours having these very loud bands but we weren't unreasonable. We practised every Saturday afternoon but this neighbour who we called Pyscho because he was a bit ... He moved in there ... previously there'd been an empty section there which was great. That was one of the reasons why I bought my house there, then lo and behold a whole house appeared from outer space one day, one of those houses that is trucked in and ...

**Interviewer:**

Lockwood?

**Peter:**

No, no a house from somewhere else, an already existing house, and this arrived from outer space and the guy ... he was a sort of older guy ... I don't know how much older, a bit older, and his wife. She never went out but he'd walk around the section and previously there'd been some really nice trees and shrubs on the section and he cut down everything on the whole section. There was a tree in my house going half way over the ... there was a creek between us ... and he cut it directly down the middle and I said to him one day 'Why did you cut all these trees down, they were quite nice' and he got really angry and said 'It's my right to do anything I like with my land' or something like that and got quite agitated. He was ... I think he had anger problems too because one day he tried to push me off my motor-bike ... I had a motor-bike and I used to just come in a little bit down the footpath to get into my driveway and he was there and he tried to push me of. It was a weird thing and we had a few run-ins like that but he hated us playing on Saturday afternoon and he used to walk up and down the section.

**Interviewer:**

While you were play, practising?

**Peter:**

Yeah, performing with his hands over his ears so we could actually see him! One of the Terminals records of the time ... we wrote a song about him called 'Psycho Lives' or 'Psycho Lives' and we did a single on an American label called Feel Good All Over I think. That was one of those great American label names ... from Chicago I think the label ... and there happened to be ... there was this American journalist called Bill Meyer who was out here. We used to increasingly get visits from American journalists and label people who would turn up in New Zealand wanting to see where all this music came from and ...

**Interviewer:**

Fan journalists!

**Peter:**

Sort of ... Bill and his partner Jessica who was a photographer were there when Psycho ... we just played a bit and Psycho was doing his thing and she took a photo of him which is on the single, I'll show you.

**Interviewer:**

It's on the cover?

**Peter:**

Yeah on the cover, walking up and down.

**Interviewer:**

Immortalised.

**Peter:**

Yeah. So we had quite a bit of contact with America. We did singles on a few American labels. Then finally 'Uncoffined' got released and ...

**Interviewer:**

Not through Flying Nun though?

**Peter:**

No, through Flying Nun.

**Interviewer:**

Oh it was through Flying Nun, right.

**Peter:**

Yeah but over two years later or something when we were sort of estranged from them. Like when we played in Auckland ... we did one national tour at this stage. We played in ... I think we played in Dunedin, Wellington, Hamilton and Auckland in '93, the beginning of '93, and we played at the Gluepot in Auckland and I remember people didn't know any of our Xpressway stuff or anything like that. At that stage we'd just been contacted by a German label called Raffmond who wanted to release something by us and we were going to do our new album with them. So when we got up there and people thought we were a Flying Nun band and they only knew our Flying Nun releases that was quite strange. Then I think we shocked them when we played because we were way way noisier ... well even

early on ... if they'd seen us early on I don't think we would have been quite what they expected, because we were actually always quite noisy ... but this was quite a lot more noisy than they expected. By noise I mean there was this sort of improvisation on the synthesiser and improvised guitar ... Brian does basically the same things as the Sonic Youth guitarists do ... playing with a bit of structure but not a hell of a lot.

**Interviewer:**

Around this period you began your improvisation, there was this sort of ...

**Peter:**

I have to go back a bit on that. All the previous groups had like, even as far back as the Vacuum there were sort of one or two things that we'd usually play at the end of the set. There were like ... freeform freak-outs we used to call them at the time. And so there'd be that improvisational element and I was pretty familiar with all that stuff and familiar with free jazz like from about ... some things from really early on and then from about 1980 a lot of things like Albert Ayler and Sun Ra were in there ... and so yes there was a bit of ... Allen Meek and I played once or twice with one of the guys from the Perfect Strangers who were a Christchurch group who were like The And Band. The Perfect Strangers were a group of people with shifting membership at that stage, I think, and they did ... they were probably the only groups from the early '80s that actually did all-improvised, well pretty much all-improvised stuff, They had sort of skeletal songs at times but they were actually doing that and nobody else did it, like entire sets of it. I know there was the Primitive Art group in Wellington ...

**Interviewer:**

That was more of a jazz style.

**Peter:**

We thought of them as more trad in a way whereas say The And Band and the Perfect Strangers were coming more from a punk/noise thing ... which the Dead C were also ... so that's a slightly different thing.

**Interviewer:**

There was something I read somewhere about how someone had interviewed you. Maybe it was John Bywater actually, talking about certainty in relation to improvisation and how that yeah ...

**Peter:**

Yeah I remember playing one of those Vacuum songs. It was either 'Accident' or ... the other one he had was a thing called 'Russian Rug' and they were kind of indeterminately structured things. I remember one day ... even though Stephen and I had played what we thought was free-form music years before that ... I remember it just sort of dawned on me what it was ... the whole improvised thing, what that was, and just being a bit aware of the leap that it took, getting away from the whole being able to rely on the structure of songs.

**Interviewer:**

So do you think that extends out generally to your life, that sort of paradigm as it were, do you think that could be used as a metaphor for how you've lived in any way?

**Peter:**

No. With some people I wonder if it's in reverse almost. Not so much with me. I'm probably somewhere in between. I don't think I'm ... I think I'm pretty ... my general life is ... I

wouldn't say conservative but I don't think I do different things very much and you know just thinking of other people who do the sort of music and I think a lot of them have very structured lives and ...

**Interviewer:**

They can let go in music instead?

**Peter:**

Yeah. I think it's a space where people can let go. In fact a lot of ... just thinking about it ... a lot of people in say rock music have much less structured lives ... who play in song bands. I'm not sure without doing a survey, but yeah I have a suspicion that it might be a little bit in reverse. About that time I got made redundant from the wharf in 1990 and after working there for so long ... I should backtrack again a bit ... I met Kim in 1988 or '89 or something and she was a friend of Ross and Stephanie ... Ross who had been in the Terminals. Ross was the manager of Smith's Bookshop in Christchurch and I was in there one day and she was there ... I didn't know who she was ... she was asking Ross what was the name of his band and he couldn't bear to say the name because he didn't like the name. He thought it was a negative name!

**Interviewer:**

Oh because it's terminally ill kind of connotation?

**Peter:**

He took that thing and he said to her ask that guy over there, he's in the band too and so she came over and asked me what was the name of my band.

**Interviewer:**

Oh nice, that was your introduction?

**Peter:**

Yeah! We ended up having a cup of tea down the back of Smith's where people used to go and drink tea. But she was living in the Bay of Islands or something, and then she came back.

**Interviewer:**

And so Kim wasn't making music at that point ... she was painting then?

**Peter:**

Yeah. She was a painter ... I don't know how much she was doing. She'd started doing it much more regularly I think, just at that point, and when she moved to Christchurch and got a studio in the Arts Centre she painted all the time and she started playing, she started getting interested in music. She already had quite definite musical tastes ... it was sort of mainly outsider folk ... people like Tim Buckley and a whole lot of other people around that time. They were people who I didn't know so it was quite interesting to hear. But she got quite interested in playing. Because she was an abstract painter and had a kind of automatic painting method, she got quite interested in playing music in that way because our living room, if you can call it that, had all the musical instruments set up around the room.

**Interviewer:**

Is this when you'd bought your land?

**Peter:**

Yeah that's still in Christchurch ... my house in Christchurch. So that was our furniture and so she started tinkering around and things and played a bit of drums I think, and started playing the bass. She really liked the bass so we decided to try playing ... this is when I was ... at that stage I was in the Terminals so probably the late '80s, '89/'90 ... having some kind of free-form sessions. We got Mick along and so we were playing long improvisations around very sort of skeletal riffs that he came up with and Kim started singing my words to them. She wanted to sing my words in a totally different way from what Stephen sung ... in a kind of much more improvisational, vocally improvisational, style which she thought suited them better. So we had these but Mick wasn't very happy with that. Mick is a great improviser, like really good, but his head and his hands are in quite different places and his head is very much that he wants to play structured music and the more structured the better. There's always this kind of battle with him ... which has been the history of the Terminals especially ... between what he thinks and what he plays ... which is kind of weird. So we ... I think we ... we worked out a name Dadamah which was from a lyric we had. And I kept seeing, or we kept seeing, Roy at Film Society screenings. We used to go to the Arts Centre, go up this sort of winding staircase, up to the Clock Tower which is a great film venue ... unfortunately long gone ... well it's still there but something else is there now. Roy was interested in playing music again. He'd come back from Europe and so he came over and we started playing together ... that's sort of like 1990. So I was writing lyrics for both Dadamah and the Terminals. I was writing a lot of stuff ... I'd probably never written that much but it was a really prolific period in Dadamah. And we got Kim's friend Janine in the band to play keyboards and we had ... well I don't know if it had ever been Mick's ... we had this synthesiser ... I think it was ours actually. Yeah, that's right, because the Renderers had had it but they couldn't do anything with it. They didn't like it and so I bought it off them for a hundred dollars or something and so we had this synthesiser and Janine used to play it. She was really good. She'd never played music before but she was always very interested in music. So we had four people playing ... at first Kim was just singing.

**Interviewer:**

Right this is Kim Pieters?

**Peter:**

Yeah.

**Interviewer:**

And what was Janine's last name?

**Peter:**

Janine Stagg. Later on she changed her name to Honorlee ... Puff the Magic Dragon! For what reason I'm not sure ... but anyway at that stage she was Janine. So there was Roy playing guitar, Janine playing synth and organ, me playing drums and Kim singing. It was a very sparse sound and I suppose quite Krautrocky, because that suited Roy's, especially, and my styles. We just played fairly repetitive stuff and very quickly we got these single releases in the States. Bruce Russell was going over there and we gave him a tape to play to any label people that he knew over there. Straight away we got this label wanting to release us called Majora, from Seattle I think. It turned out Bruce ... he'd played it to Tom Lax of Siltbeez and Tom had really liked it and then he said Bruce just took it away. He wouldn't let him have it even.

**Interviewer:**

Why?

**Peter:**

Bruce had decided that this guy, that we'd be a good match with this mysterious Majora label who had released the Sun City Girls. He just decided this on his own, that it would be better for us and yeah ... and so we released two singles on Majora and we ... The whole time Dadamah were together which was probably ... I don't know ... two years at the most we only played live I think about three times. We played once with the Terminals in Christchurch. We played once at a party and once in Dunedin somewhere here with Gate I think. So we just had no ... we were almost totally unknown. We didn't exist in New Zealand but weirdly we started getting all this press in the States and so it was kind of like we were quite well-known in the States.

**Interviewer:**

I think you're well-known here but retrospectively

**Peter:**

A lot of it was just because we didn't play at all and Roy wasn't very comfortable playing live anyway. It didn't worry the rest of us but Roy always got very nervous. Even I remember back in the Pin Group days he got incredibly nervous about playing live and didn't enjoy it so that was part of it probably, yeah. And then we did a 12" EP and increasingly the artwork for these records got ... it was quite a big thing even from the start of the Terminals and even further back than that ... but especially from the Terminals things. There were covers by Ronnie Van Hout on the first EP and then Kim did both 'Uncoffined' and the next one, which was released on Raffmond in Germany, called 'Touch.' So increasingly there were artists and Kim did the artwork for the Dadamah singles and that got quite a lot of attention too.

**Interviewer:**

There always seems to be and still does continue this way, very strong ties with the art world because this music fits into the art world so much more easily than the rock or the music industry so it's a much more sympathetic culture for it isn't it?

**Peter:**

Yeah that's true. And we especially noticed that in Dunedin where ... I think because people don't think they can have a career in either one whereas maybe in other places it gets more that you have to go one way or the other and concentrate. Jenny Rendall who's a friend of ours from Christchurch ... who's a painter ... did the cover for the Dadamah album which Majora released, called 'This is Not a Dream.' That's a great image. Then Dadamah finished and Roy and Janine both went overseas, that was the main ... there was no kind of acrimony or anything like that. At that stage Kim and I had decided we wanted to move to Dunedin so we moved to Dunedin while they went to the States although not together ... separately.