

## Saturna

THE RENAISSANCE of B-grade. Academics of all persuasions clinging to their own importance by finding new projects in which they can pour their crusty adjectives. Sitting in private university cinemas, watching Russ Meyer movies, enjoying the ogling until the end. The lights go off and all is quiet except for the sound of changing film in the projectionist booth. The new movie comes on. *Saturna Saturnina vs The Idiots*. Light reflects garish colours. Vinyl and nylon. Electric guitars and synthesised noise. Other worldly elements come together, creating a scene that has the academics empty for adjectives yet drooling over the B-grade splendour. Is it good? Is it bad? They ask themselves, but only *Saturna* can answer. "I like it... It's nice..." What more needs to be

said? But the crusty professors want more, so somewhere in a small corner of Wellington they ask the questions.

*Saturna Saturnina* (aka Victoria Singh) has teamed up with the idiots - Derek Champion (Id), Chris Swain (I), Simon Swain (ot), and various 'S's that have included Alistair Watson, Rufus Dayglo, and Mire Swain. The union has created more than just music, more than just performance music/art. The project has become an industry of bizarre delight.

"*Saturna* first came into being with *Dr Versuvus*. After that ended I still wanted to explore the character of *Saturna* further. The first performance was in New Plymouth of all places, at a women's music festival. That was a solo show, with me using drum pads and a guitar accompaniment."

"In August of last year I went to Vancouver. While I was there the *Poetpolloza* was happening, which preceded the *Lollapolloza* tour. I contacted the organisers and told them I was a performance artist from New Zealand and asked if I could perform. The show was

quite well received, and that inspired me to continue. Back here, Derek suggested that he add a sort of wild beat poet type character to the show, and that was the start of what we've got now." Since the beginning of this year, it has grown into a full band. *Saturna Saturnina* was commissioned to do a show at Bats for the Fringe festival, and from there things have become stronger. Plans to tour have been postponed by an urge to record material, which must pose a problem for the act with such emphasis on the visual. "There is a lot of improvising and spontaneity in the shows, keeping things as fresh and alive as possible, which I think is really important as the whole thing is meant to be an abstract, impressionist cabaret, and there are some things you just can't rehearse. So, with recording, we are still not sure of how to really approach it."

"Recording is quite an exact thing, and if you try to make it sound spontaneous it can come out as contrived, so I think we'll come up with a different concept for our recording," says Derek Champion.

"When we do record, we would like to get material printed at that cottage record pressing plant in Geraldine. The discs are great. They look really plastic and synthetic - and that's the kind of image we want," says Derek.

"We haven't played very many gigs with the line up we've got now, so I think there's a lot of room to explore the concept further. I'd like to go further into the production aspect, as well as the performance aspect."

*Saturna Saturnina* may be the chief focal point of the shows, but the attention can shift from her to Derek, or to the various 'S's who perform tasks that range between distributing lollipops to the audience to bathing baby dolls. Yet there is still another aspect to the *Saturna Saturnina* empire to be explored.

Victoria is a designer with a range of back packs, holsters, and other accessories that have all fit into the *Saturna* image, creating an industry inside itself.

"It's all about laughing at the seriousness of everything. There are too many bands out there who

feel that they must fit into a certain format. Many feel that they are doing something different, but they're not, and they can't break out of that way of performing," says Derek.

This shook the foundations of the academic crusties as the lights flicked on after the *Saturna Saturnina* show. Russ Meyer didn't have a patch on this. But slowly they began to get the meaning. Packing note pads into *Saturna Saturnina* back packs, they glanced at each other with knowing smiles.

They like it... It was nice...

Donald Reid



Photography: Aaron Lucy