

The Clean in the dreamlife you need a rubber soul

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Preface

Over a coffee in a Cuba Street café in Wellington many years ago, Auckland University Press director Sam Elworthy proposed I write a book on The Clean. Which I thought was a good idea – someone *should've* written that book. I personally didn't know how to go about such an undertaking – just because you've listened to a band for forty years does not qualify you to write about them. And finding the time was another issue due to my daily commitments as a television director and journalist. The idea lay dormant.

Some years later, out of the blue, I was asked by a publisher who specialised in covering niche and underexposed rock music scenes, Todd Novak of Hozac Books in Chicago, if I wanted to turn the six issues of a fanzine I'd edited about Flying Nun music in the '80s, *Garage*, into a book. The result, *Pull Down the Shades*, was published in 2023. Sam Elworthy, quick as you like and cunning as a bush rat, phoned and asked, 'Bitten by the book bug yet?' Well yes, actually. When I think about it, a book on The Clean was an idea that David Kilgour and I had previously discussed. I had once told him, possibly more in a daydream than in any reality, that I was thinking about writing a book on Flying Nun, and he said in an uncharacteristically forward manner, 'No, write one about us!' Holy shit, that's a good idea. With Sam's prodding and my recalling David's comment, I thought it was time to do something about it.

Once Hamish Kilgour and Robert Scott also agreed to tell the story, David and I discussed how to go about it, and we agreed on an oral history. We liked that format of storytelling as you can hear the unmediated voices of the different participants, giving it an immediacy, and the richness of multiple voices talking about the same events. From there it came together quickly over eighteen months or so.

Sadly, by the time the writing of the book was underway, Hamish Kilgour had died. Hamish had always been a great talker and there was an archive of his interviews to draw upon. The other founding member of The Clean, Peter Gutteridge, had also died, but again there were his past interviews to call on. Even though he had been kicked out of the band early on, Peter played intermittently with The Clean until his death. He never lost his love for the music they made.

My thanks to the band and those interviewed in the book for sharing their memories and insights. David Kilgour and Robert Scott opened their considerable archives of letters, photos and diaries, and the ever-helpful Alec Bathgate was an invaluable source of photos, gig dates and insights. I want to thank Matthew Goody for laying the foundation stone of Flying Nun history, *Needles and Plastic: Flying Nun Records, 1981–1988*. I called on Matthew’s brilliant research many times, and he offered further help and encouragement during the writing of The Clean story. My thanks to Craig Robertson for sharing his years of research into the Chris Knox story; to documentary makers Pat O’Neill and Stuart Page, and Gavin Bertram of the *Otago Daily Times*, for providing additional interviews with Hamish Kilgour and Peter Gutteridge. To Alec Bathgate, Terry Moore, Craig McNab, Chris Knox, Reg Feuz, Jonathan Ganley, Tim Soter and Carol Tippet, who dug into their photo archives. To Simon Grigg who, among other things, tracked down the date Dylan Taite’s influential report on punk was first broadcast in New Zealand in 1976. To Michael Brown of the National Library for general help in using their substantial Flying Nun archives. To Bob Sutton for cassettes of his Clean recordings. To the tireless Andy Ellis, who runs the Unofficial Flying Nun Music Vault from his Dunedin home, for scanning posters, photos and visual material. Andrew Schmidt for sharing his research. Shayne Carter for encouragement and advice. When he wasn’t in the surf, a long-time friend of the band’s, Paul McNeil, telephoned to keep me on track, and offered early advice: you have to interview the women! On that note, in researching this book, I came to understand what a strong woman Hamish and David’s mother, Helen, was. She kept her family together as a working solo mother when her husband’s mental state deteriorated. When David accepted the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2001 for services to music, he did it for his mother as much as anyone.

To Vicky, and our children, Kate, Jack and Milly, who listened through their childhood to the sounds of The Clean, which they said made a welcome change from listening to The Go-Betweens, The Chills and the rest of the Flying Nun stable. My thanks also to those friends who offered support and encouragement. To my twin sister, Suraya, who provided accommodation, many laughs and many music-listening sessions on my various trips to Dunedin. To the production team of Sam Elworthy, Sophia Broom, designer Katie Kerr and editor Caren Wilton for shepherding the project through the many gates and out into the open paddock. To Martin Phillipps, who made time for me when he knew his was running out. Martin warmed to the task, telephoning David Kilgour to check facts and compare memories. Ever polite, he thanked me for sparking what he said was his longest chat with David for some time. Again it was only in researching this book that I came to understand how much Martin shared in The Clean story. RIP, old buddy. You’re much missed.



The Clean at Big Daddy’s takeaway, Dunedin, 1989. From left: Hamish Kilgour, David Kilgour, Robert Scott. Photograph: Craig McNab, pufferfish-photography



SUBWAY
ENTRANCE

TO SUBWAY

The Clean by the subway at Dunedin Hospital, 1980. From left: Robert Scott, David Kilgour, Hamish Kilgour.
Photograph: Craig McNab, pufferfish-photography