

COUNTDOWN

MAGAZINE

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CLUED OPERATOR



MODELS THE SAINTS WATERBOYS
ALEXEI SAYLE THE JOHNNYS

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A close-up portrait of Boy George, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He has dark, spiky hair and is wearing a white shirt and a black and white checkered tie. The background is a textured blue.

boy george

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LENNON

Going father afield?

Julian Lennon celebrated his 23rd birthday by taking a day off. That, for him, is quite an event. In the last year and a half, he has recorded two albums, toured the world, made a video movie, been nominated for a Grammy, and appeared on television shows and in magazines and newspapers constantly, trying very hard to let people see that Julian Lennon and John Lennon are two very different people.

The martyr's son has grown up a lot in that time, and he's also become very tired. Physically tired, emotionally tired. Not every step has been a positive one. His skin may have cleared up, but he also broke up with his girlfriend of three years — only partly because they were separated so much by his career demands.

"It was thanks to the press," he snarls, then smiles forgivingly: "The English press. See, there were a lot of rumours floating around, and because we didn't have enough faith in each other to call each other up — or, rather, because she didn't have enough faith in me to call me up after a rumour had been spread in the paper, we split. It was just before Christmas."

Julian does get a lot of press, and it's often negative: Julian was seen drunk at a club, Julian was hot-rodding around in a sports car, Julian was shouting and laughing and generally not conforming to his duties as John Lennon's son. He is in the position of Caesar's wife: he has to be holier than thou at all times. And he's a 23-year-old pop star who wouldn't mind feeling his oats, thank you, and having a bit of a laugh every now and again.

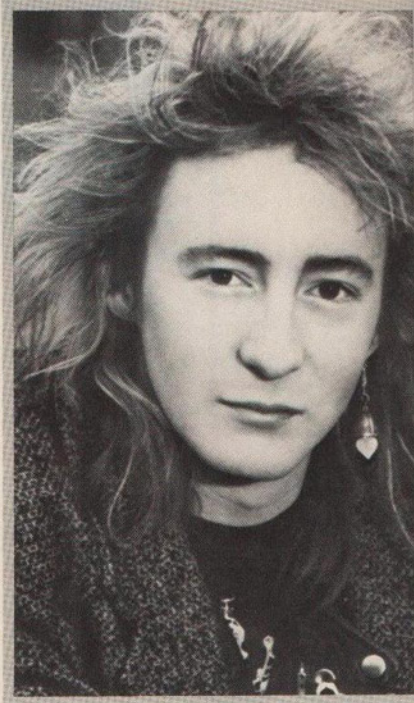
"I like to mess around," he says, chain-smoking and sounding weary. "I like to have fun. I try not to be too serious all the time."

He's tired because he just finished recording *The Secret Value of Daydreaming*, writing the songs in the recording studio, and was then whisked off directly to tour rehearsals. A world tour takes him through America from June to September, then it's off to Japan and Australia and — somewhere in those 8 months on the road — Europe. His first tour was a sell-out, partly because people were curious to see John's son. His second tour will be a sellout, he hopes, because people want to come and see Julian, the pop star.

"I think the last world tour did a world of good," he says, "getting me out there, doing my own thing. Or trying to, anyway. Learning how to perform. The first time around I was pretty shy, but the more I learn, the better I do."

"I'm still dealing with trying to get myself known," he says. "I'm getting there."

Of course, Julian Lennon was a household name long before he recorded his debut album, *Valotte*. The Beatles' *Hey Jude* was written for him, as everyone knows, and *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds* was inspired by a sketch he made as a



schoolboy. He played tambourine with George Harrison at the concert for Bangla Desh, and appeared — at age 11 — on his father's *Walls and Bridges* LP, banging the drum to the song *Y Tu Va*. But his hardest efforts have been to make people forget all that. And it's taken a lot of work.

"I haven't had much time to myself this last year," he sighs. "I'm looking forward to that. I'm human, you know. I have to rest once in a while. I mean, I may be young, but I still need some rest."

He's been living in New York lately, because that's where the rest of his band lives, and "the band are my best friends. He's something of a pack rat, collecting "junk," as he calls it "to keep myself reminded of what I've done. I used to keep diary," he adds, "but not any more. I might get back to it one day."

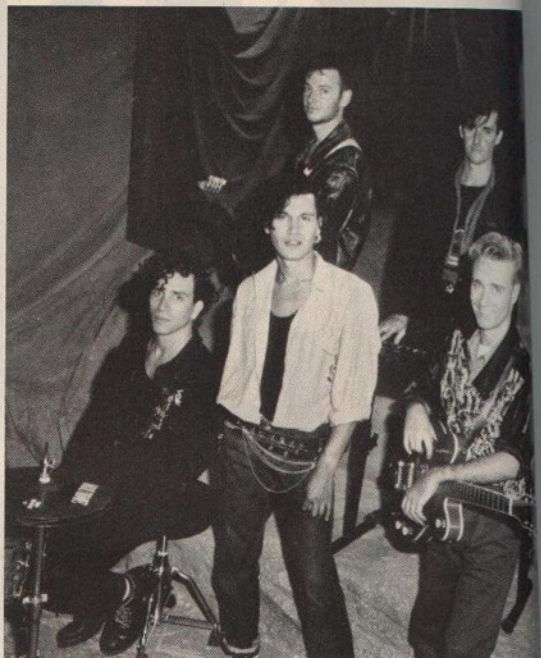
Julian Lennon is strangely self-possessed for his age, and somewhat distant. The fear one senses in him isn't so much of assassination — rumours about his security precautions are greatly exaggerated — but rather a fear of not living up to the world's expectations of him.

"I just want to be myself," he says. "I just want to be a musician, to act naturally. I think with this new album, we should pull through on our own merit. I don't know," he muses. "I'll just have to wait and see. I have to see what the public thinks."

"But after this tour," he brightens, "I'm going to take a couple of months off. If I hold out, that is."

by Ethlie Ann Vare

BOOM CRASH OPERA



Boom Crash Opera: back — Richard Pleasance and Greg O'Connor; front — Peter Maslen, Dale Ryder, Peter Farnan.

"Opera Death Pact!" the daily tabloid banner screamed at me on my way to meet Richard Pleasance and Greg O'Connor of Boom Crash Opera. "No, not us," they laughed about it. "Not yet!"

Of course not, when you're an enthusiastic young band with a buzz of interest around them and a hit single. And though these two have their share of on-the-road horror tales to tell, they believe their workload is making them stronger as a band all the time:

"I think," says bassist Richard, "that the band's biggest achievement lately has been the coming together of musical ideas and personalities, and I think that's been brought about by the constant touring we're doing. I think the band is more of a real band now rather than five individuals. We rely on our personalities which are very different, and that mutual dependence makes it very strong."

Ask for the outstanding features of those personalities and Richard kids:

"My good looks, Greg's beautiful hands, Peter's haircut . . ."

Seriously now . . . "Well," he continues, "Spock (Greg — keyboard boffin) has quite sophisticated tastes, he's like a quality control filter. Peter Farnan (guitar) is a good source of energy, he gives everyone a kick up the bum if they're not releasing their utmost. Dale Ryder's singing skill is undeniable and (drummer) Peter Maslen's rhythmic push. If I had a strong point," he concluded modestly, "I'd like to think it was musical direction."

"That direction has led them to the Top Ten with the Great Wall single, a song with a story behind its harmonies.

"It was an idea inspired by the story of the cracks in the Hume Weir," says Greg, "and the people below living in fear. But there are also metaphors attached to it: it's the wall that people erect in their mind to protect themselves, the wall of prejudice."

They feel strongly about the importance and sincerity of this and all their other songs. In fact, they've obviously thought out their situation as pop band very thoroughly.

"Pop," explains Richard, "can be and should be an expressive art form. 'Art form' is a funny way to describe it, but I think people who think you have to compromise to write pop music are wrong. You can accept the parameters of pop, and get in there and work around them, break a few rules and present things differently. For five minutes on 'Countdown' you can reach into a lounge room in Wangaratta and excite someone."

And as to what it is that's exciting people in Wangaratta and elsewhere, the boys have a hopeful idea.

"If they're getting excited about Boom Crash Opera, we'd like to think it's because of our obvious energy. We do have a lot of energy in our performance, and I think you can hear it on record too. We're not a technical studio band, we're a performing band. You can feel the sweat."

Rosa Senese