

MEET THE FLASHEZ DUO

Two guys who really get a buzz out of living are comperes of the top rating ABC show "Flashez"

ALAN MACKENZIE REPORTS

The two guys started "Flashez" last year . . . the show's birthday was just a minute ago . . . and have recorded more than 200 shows. Something like three quarters of a million people tune into "Flashez" Monday to Friday to watch this on-the-go twosome and get clued up on all the newsy flashes of the day. For Ray and Mike "Flashez" is virtually a way of life . . . and 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week job. But as both of them believe in being involved, in capital letters, and getting into as many things as they can, the whole "Flashez" scene is exactly what they enjoy. Ray is one who handles most of the musical side of the show while Mike is very much in the interviewer's chair, reporting on almost anything that is of interest and shows a side of life you might not normally come in contact with. Mike is also the funny man of this "Flashez" duo and that could well be due to the fact that he has learnt, from very personal experience, that life can be very funny. Twenty-seven-years old and originally from Perth, Mike has had a pretty chequered career. Long haired, slim as a rake and funny in a very quiet, under played, throw-away style, he started off as a cameraman for a television station in Perth. He only went into that after

seeing an advertisement in a paper and agreeing with his parents that he needed a job. While learning how to become a cameraman (he actually did end up as a floor manager) he also became a part-time puppeteer. Someone gave him a dragon hand puppet, later nicknamed Claude, and Mike started messing about with it until finally he made his television debut in front of the camera . . . or at least Claude did. Then in January, '74, a friend rang from Sydney, told Mike that his job was boring, that it was time he took himself across country to Australia and that no one in Sydney had a sense of humour. Mike agreed. When he hit Sydney he went off to TCN 9 as a floor manager and worked part-time for the ABC as a puppeteer. However, Mike became bored with all that, he admits it quite honestly, so resigned and took himself off to the auditions for "Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band On The Road". He auditioned as a singer and was called back for a second try-out with the instructions that he learn two songs. Mike did all that, turned up for the second audition and ended up being hired as a dancer. (Fortunately Mike is not one to worry too desperately about such things and as the job appealed, he took it and danced with



the show for three months.) When the show finished he was asked by the ABC to sit in on the auditions then being held to find an interviewer/comper for the pop show "Flashez".

Mike's job was to let the "job applicants" interview him so the ABC powers-that-be could see them in action and find just the right person. None of them suited because Mike stole the show and was given the job.

At the time Mike was living on a farm outside of Sydney with singer Ross Ryan. While indulging in country living, Mike became a vegetarian, and looked after the farm's inhabitants which consisted of two horses, three dogs, two cats, two budgies, a parrot, four goldfish and a goat!

However, with his commitment to "Flashez" and the amount of time involved in putting the show together, Mike had to come back to "civilisation".

Mike says he has no great driving ambition in life . . . except to be happy and do lots of things, something he is certainly succeeding in.

Very much into music: "I grew up a Beatles freak and was bored in school, till they gave life a purpose, or at least a good beat"; he sits up half the night listening to music.

He has also just become a recording musician with his first single on Mushroom Records (both sides written by himself), and hopes he might get the chance to follow up with an album.

Being a success on record isn't all that important to Mike. He isn't obviously fussed about whether he hits the top of the charts or simply gathers dust in record shops around the country.

"At least there is a guaranteed sale of two records," he says totally dead pan. "I have a copy and I know mum has one."

The other half of the on-camera "Flashez" team, Ray Burgess, is a guy who has been around for a while and has made quite a mark on the Australian music scene.

Originally from Melbourne, Mike started off working as a teller in a bank while singing at night. In '71 he was given the chance to sing full-time with a band called Redtime, so decided to try it — he found he was yawning at the bank a lot so figured there wasn't too much to lose. He stayed with the band for three

years, it was the backing group for Johnny Farnham for a time, then in '74, after working the club and hotel circuit throughout the country, decided to go solo.

Since then there has been no stopping the rise of Ray. To date his singles include "Rock 'n' Roll Lightening", "Love Fever", "Touch Me" and "Gloria"; and his albums "Not So Pretty" and his second which has just been released which we suspect will be a great seller.

Ray is at the moment into poetry and plans to release a book later this year containing 30 pieces. He's been into writing for years, mainly songs, which he says have always been bad. However, his poetry book will be his writing debut and Ray figures if he keeps at his musical writing, one day it will be good enough for public consumption, too.

So, how did Ray score the second comper's seat on "Flashez"? Simple, by being a success. After he released his first single back in '74 he started appearing regularly on "Countdown" and finally was given the chance of compering the show.

In the end he compered eight of the shows and went on to do a daily series for 13 weeks in Melbourne called "Rock and Roll Circus".

At this stage the search was on for the "Flashez" comperes and Ray, with his on-camera experience, was asked to audition in Melbourne. He was yet again successful.

With success Ray finds himself constantly on the run . . . life is a pretty hectic affair. Once "Flashez" is put together there is not all that much time for other things, though somehow Ray manages to fit in recording sessions, the occasional live concert and promotion trips.

The day we spoke to him he had just flown in from Coff's Harbour on the NSW North Coast, and that was after dashing down to Melbourne for the day.

The "Flashez" guys wouldn't quite know what had hit them if they were not whirling around on the go constantly. They both very much believe in doing things, in being involved and certainly getting as big a buzz as they can simply out of enjoying what they are doing.

And could just be one very good reason why "Flashez" is such a success. Three quarters of a million people is quite an impressive number of folk to chat to five days a week!