

# Aussie 'Icehouse' heats up in the U.S.

By MARY CAMPBELL  
AP Newsfeatures Writer

In 1981, the Australian group Icehouse opened for the British group Simple Minds in Britain and Simple Minds opened for Icehouse in Australia. Icehouse singer-songwriter Iva Davies recalls that the 1981 arrangement worked well for both bands.

"It was right after our second album, *Primitive Man*. Simple Minds still was not huge, even in Britain. In Australia, we were very successful. They'd tell you themselves it was the first time they really achieved recognition. The dates we opened for Simple Minds, we were received really well.

"Eventually *Primitive Man* became a success in Europe and we had a top 20 hit from it in Britain, 'Hey Little Girl.'"

Icehouse now has a new Chrysalis album, *Man of Colours*, and is touring in America, opening for the Cars. The title song from Icehouse's fifth LP, "Man of Colours," has been said to be inspired by Andrew Wyeth and his Helga paintings.

Davies, who wrote "Man of Colours," says he thought he was writing about himself. "I wrote

the lyrics very quickly," he said. "I wasn't aware of the Andrew Wyeth story, but I must have been, subliminally."

"It's about an old man who lives in an attic and paints paintings of some girl he was in love with 40 or 50 years ago. He never shows them to anybody, just looks at them himself. That's all he needs."

"Man of Colours" entered the Australian charts at No. 1. It has one song, "Electric Blue," written by Davies and John Oates of Hall and Oates.

"I met him a long time ago in an airport in Australia," Davies recalls. "Last year he contacted me and said it might be good to write together. He came out to Australia, which I thought was amazing, for 10 days. We toyed around with a few songs, finished a couple and both of us knew 'Electric Blue' was the better song. It is No. 2 at the moment in Australia."

Davies says it was great fun working with Oates, whom he calls "a proper songwriter."

"I'm not used to working with people. He led in the initial stages, until I felt comfortable. Then I think I led him. He has very high standards. A couple of times he definitely pushed me to go for something more direct."

# Giants

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"I tried to wonder what his life would be like. Everything he does is defined by his appearance. The song came out of that wondering, though it's not exactly about him. It's the closest thing to a sincere, sad song on the album."

When asked if they worry about being categorized as a comedy band, Flansburgh said, "Well, it's obvious that there's humor in what we do. It's better than being categorized as heavy metal."

Their travels have included opening for Robyn Hitchcock at Haverford College and a recent tour of Europe and Japan. "I'll tell you a secret," said Flansburgh, "The entire first row at the Robyn Hitchcock concert was tripping."

Their trip to England took even stranger turns. "Our record company in England, Rough Trade, booked us into a Mexican restaurant for a show for record company people. Then we played a place called Sir George Roeb's in London. The audience was reserved, very cool. They stood five feet back from the stage. They wouldn't come any closer," said Linnell.

At the Village Gate, the crowd yelled enthusiastically for many different songs, some of which haven't even been recorded yet. TMBG attracts a witty crowd, as evidenced by the woman who yelled, "Which one's John?" between songs. When the shouts for an encore persisted, Flansburgh deadpanned, "C'mon, you know we can't." TMBG couldn't

do any songs that weren't already on their prerecorded backing tapes.

When asked about using tapes in their live show, Flansburgh said, "There will always be some people who will say that we're not a real band unless we get a rhythm section. We've tried to find drummers, but the ones who can play all the different rhythms in our songs are playing in Broadway pit bands. We don't have the money to compete."

"We once tried a gig with a jazz trio," Flansburgh continued. "And it was interesting, but the drummer started every song way too fast. After the show, a friend of mine said, 'John, I could tell that you were really communicating with the drummer that one time when you looked at him,' when in fact I was trying to get the guy to slow down!"

TMBG is currently being courted by some major labels, but Flansburgh said, "We really can't talk about it." Meanwhile, they're working on their second, yet-untitled album. Some of the songs will come from their cassette, and some will be all-new. None will come from Dial-A-Song. "All those songs are exclusively for the service," Flansburgh said.

"We want to go as far as we can," Linnell said. "But we like this situation we're in now. The crowd's loose, and they seem to enjoy what we're doing. We like to play for people who like us."

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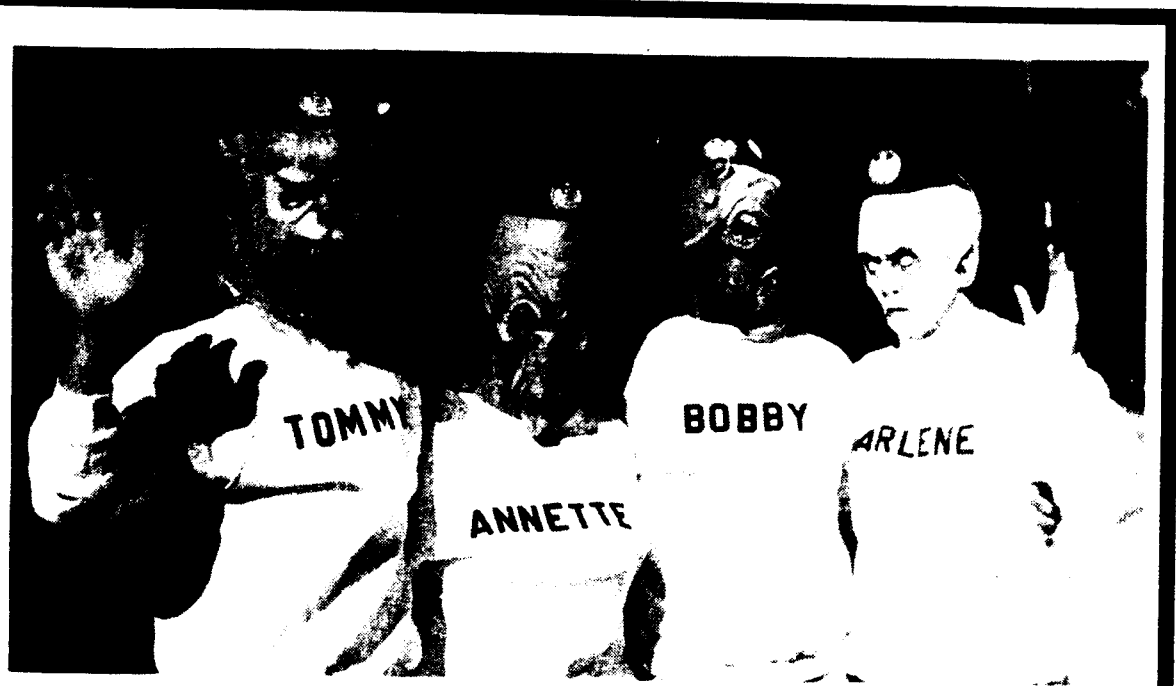


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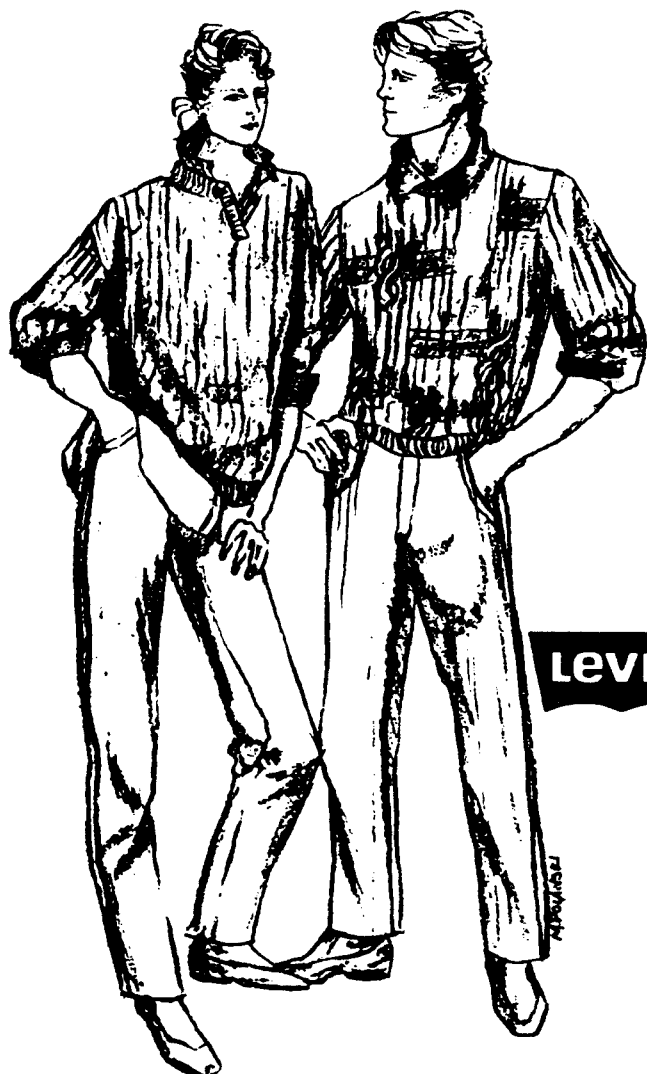
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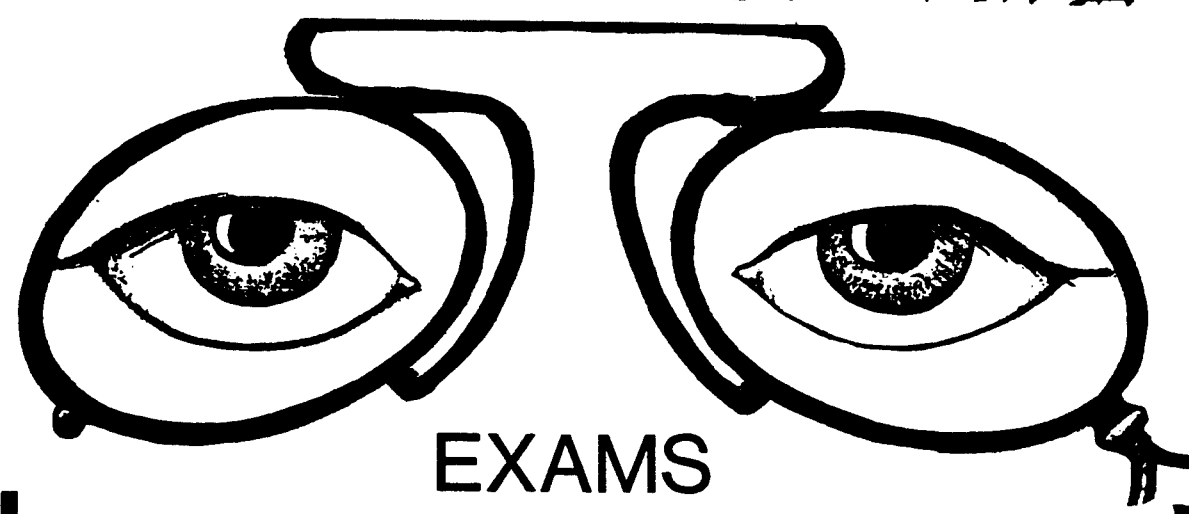
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