

Of all the new bands awaiting exposure and the taintings of the music business, there are few I would wish to see do as well as much as this trio.

## NICOLA BABY-GO-SLIPPERS of

The mysteriously named Nicola Baby-Go-Slippers (!) is the singer and occasional saxophonist, who freezes audiences in their tracks with her personal songs. As a band they write some of the most effortlessly disturbing and enthralling music that you could ever wish to hear. In fact the music is of such a rare breed that it is quite unintentionally commercial—the band would have no problems keeping a record company happy. The fact that they're so wary of involvement with such organisations is to their credit, but it's also a hindrance in getting people to hear and digest their music; they claim they do not wish their art defiled in any way.

The existence of Finish The Story was due to a tragedy:

Stuart, Nicola's boyfriend, was killed in a car crash and Nicola and Garry Smout (the brain at the keyboards) formed the band as a living tribute to the man. It gave Nicola a lot of problems, whilst giving voice to her emotions: she felt she couldn't speak as easily to people as she could by putting her feelings into the traditionally artificial boundaries of a song; the songs at the same time had great therapeutic qualities, and helped her through the immediate emotional over-spill.

Since making their debut in the summer of 1981, they have performed occasionally, often stopping to re-think their approaches and overhaul their songs. The third member of Finish The Story is Pete, their dual guitarist (bass or lead, at the drop of a hat).

At that first performance I was as mesmerised as I was uncomfortable; the feeling was largely one of voyeurism observing, as we were, someone's deep-felt grief.

At the time the general explanation of what the band were about was uncertain. They simply weren't sure how people would react, or how they could explain themselves.

'How can you consider speaking or writing things that words don't even come close to expressing? It's hard to put a reason to something that *had* to be done. It's even harder convincing people that this is no ego trip; but to reject and forget the past would be callous, to play on the subject even more callous. An answer may be that no-one should ever know.'

They were certainly faced with a dilemma.

'Then it was all so clear,' explained Nicola in November 1981. 'I knew exactly what I wanted to do. The fact that it might upset people didn't cross my mind, but now it's such a touchy subject.'

There was also the added danger that by following the lines of development that bands usually travel, the actual reason for the band might be betrayed by the constant need for material.

'It got to the stage where I was put in the position of being forced to write, even though I didn't have anything to say. I couldn't cope with it. It was "Set's not long enough, we need new numbers" . . . it wasn't free at all, and you could tell. It was terrible. A big clash and we said, "Look we're going about this the wrong way. It's got to come on its own", and it works so much better now. You can't force things, not with stuff like this anyway. The thing is I'm changing all the time, the way I feel about things, and the way I look at things. The more I write, the easier I find it is to write what I feel.'

A year later, and Finish The Story have still to make that hesitant first step of contacting record companies. They are based in the South West but plan to get out and gig more frequently. They have changed a fair amount and lost their 'raw edge', accepting that as inevitable. Nicola herself finds that, looking back, she feels the bitterness and anger in her songs were perhaps the result of a strange case of persecution.

'The feeling of "I've been done" is still there, but not so nasty . . . I've mellowed a bit, but in no way have I given in. I was an angry young girl then who had something to shout about. Now I couldn't write something as blunt as "Apparently He Couldn't Hear Me". I don't find it repulsive, but there is no way that I could stand up and sing that to people now. It's something people need not know. It's become personal to me. I hate the idea of harping on about the past. I find it quite sick.'

Nicola accepts that in some ways most comment and questions are to come her way, but makes sure that people regard Finish The Story as very much a band. 'What the band is and how I would like the band to be seen are unfortunately two completely different things, because this is the "Music Biz" and there is little I can do to alter this way of "thinking". I love the thought of FTS being Peter, Garry and myself, because basically there is no way I could carry on without them. I used to think that the lead singer was "the band" and who played behind them was unimportant, but it isn't true. We have proved to ourselves that we need each other, and now we're a tightly knit trio. No writing gets done unless we're all together.'

The band are considering getting either a drummer or new equipment, having exhausted all possibilities inherent in drum machines/synth variations. Unfortunately they haven't the money to buy anything. They plan to ignore large-scale gigs totally having experienced the perils involved when supporting The Cure at the cavernous Hammersmith Odeon.

So FTS go into what they call 'Plan B' and Nicola half-jokingly declares '1983 belongs to me' and tells me that finding ten favourite singles is impossible—then comes up with them.

