

Interview with Marie Hoy – Member of the Little Bands scene (Too Fat to Fit Through the Door, Hoy Family Swingers), Member of Sacred Cowboys, Orchestra of Skin and Bone (1984–86), and No (1987–89). As an actor, she appeared in the 1986 film *Dogs in Space*, where she performed the Boys Next Door's track, "Shivers".

Let me start with the question I ask everyone. Scene? And how old were you?

Marie - Let me think, let me think. How did I get into it? It was 1977/78...really trying to remember. Well first of all – listening to music and secondly making films and wanting to do some kind of performance as well.

So, were you at Uni?

Oh no I wasn't. I can't remember where I was living but I wasn't living at home. Oh, that's right yeah – I had a flat in St. Kilda with this girl Genevieve and we were really young.

Oh, Genevieve McGuckin?

Yeah. We were really young. I remember because my dad had to go guarantor on the lease because we weren't old enough to sign it. I think there weren't that many people living in St. Kilda at that stage, then a lot of people started to move in. The first performance I did was I think it was at the Seaview Ballroom, I'm pretty sure it was. It was with Marcus Bergner – we had a little one-off band called **Too Fat to Fit Through the Door** and we did this performance with **The Boys Next Door**. One of the things that was good about performing in those days was you got paid cash and from there we started having Little Bands that would last you know, four or five performances, or maybe one performance. It was pretty spontaneous, highly spontaneous – let's put it that way, but it was good.

So, what did you do?

I had a sort of primitive drum machine, and we just had the drum machine and the singing. So, I operated the drum machine, and Marcus did the singing with a blindfold on and his singing was really amazing sort of, not real words or anything. I don't know – you would have to see it.

So, what was the impetus for you to get that together? The spontaneous act?

I'd say a mixture of fun was a bit part of it. Um, I think it was half a dare as well. I can't remember who dared us – it might have been Pierre Voltaire – you know thinking that we could be extremely entertaining and/or off putting – I don't know – anyone could do it.

So, you supported The Boys Next Door at a gig?

Yeah, think we supported them. We wouldn't admit that we supported them but yeah, that was the first time.

Why wouldn't you admit that you supported them?

Oh, I'm just mucking around (laughs); no but it's sort of the philosophy of any kind of hierarchy was an anathema, no matter who it was. You know you had some philosophy that everybody had some sort of equality when it came to expression. Although you know you didn't really believe it but you thought that you believed it.

Ok. So, there were a lot of intellectual thought going on at that time. A lot of people were reading you know, Socialist books and books on politics and people were listening to Cabaret Voltaire and all that stuff. People were starting to air the idea about what punk could be and sort of broadening – in Melbourne in particular people were expressing themselves in very artistic manner. So, from Too Fat to Fit Through the Door, other people obviously saw that, and do you think they were inspired to go off and do things sort of in that way.

I think so. And I also think that there is always a Zeitgeist so I wouldn't say that it's coming straight from there because the feeling was in the air. You know and all kinds of movements happen because it was the time for them to happen and not because of any one or two or three people. You know one person over here stands up and does something and someone over there is doing something similar and it spreads. So, I think it's in the air and the people were inspired by that feeling, that kind of atmosphere. People were reading a lot of stuff like Observers and Dada stuff and French philosophy.

So, there were some pretty radical ideas going on?

Yeah.

So, you were a part of the then Little Band Scene?

Oh yeah. I think it sort of started at... I think I was living in Fitzroy by then. There was Stuart Grant from the **Primitive Calculators** and all of them living in one house in Nicholson Street and Ollie Olsen and the **Whirlyworld** types were living next door so everyone used to use their houses as rehearsal spaces and they just kind of had a free for all rehearsal space set up all the time and people used to pop around and basically form Little Bands and then go and perform. But the good thing about them were that they were really fluid and they really didn't last long you know.

And the performances would normally happen at The Champion Hotel?

Yeah, The Champion was quite good actually, yeah, The Champion was wild. I had a band with my brothers

The Hoy Family Swingers?

Yeah, and Stuart Grant – he wasn't a Hoy but yeah and we used to think "Oh shit! We really need some money so let's go and perform!"

And you would just rock up and get twenty-four bucks or something?

Yeah, and then go and spend it all unwisely...

So, from a female perspective, obviously there were a lot of men in punk scene or the alternative music scene at the time. You were one of the very few women who got up and performed. What does it feel like to be one of the few women who was performing? I heard there was a lot of sexism, and that sort of stuff going on?

Yeah. I would really agree with that. I would say that women were probably categorised into a couple of different groups you know. I'm talking about the broader male perspective – I'm not one so I don't really know but I can only guess. There were the sort of girls that came to the gigs and stuff just to watch and I think they were not necessarily treated with any sort of respect, and there were the girlfriends and then possibly someone like me who...I think you had to be really tough, and you really had to have a strong ethos of what you are about to ignore that kind of shit, because it happened all the time.

I remember when I was in this band with Ollie Olsen called **NO** and there were these guys that used to come to every gig and come to our band room later and you know, drink all the beer and stuff. That sort of happened you know at that time. But I remember this guy saying to me – this fuckin idiot you know that came to our gig and was a useless piece of shit and sat in the band room drinking the beer. And he said to me, “Oh you used to be a groupie”. I said “excuse me!?” He said, “Yeah you used to be a groupie in the punk days”. I said “Excuse me fucking idiot! What are you now? Sitting there drinking my beer!” That idea that if you were there and were a woman – you had to be a sexual object. And there was this fat git sitting there. I said, “you are not even useful as a groupie pal”. Look at ya! Don’t you dare talk to me like that! If people shit me, I really do have a go. Yeah, I think it was really sexist. And I think that I was always outspoken and defensive about that.

So, what about the other women who were performing – your contemporaries? There were people like Denise Rosenberg and Lisa Gerad.

Lisa Gerad, I think was with Little Bands. It was mainly in Fitzroy, and it wasn’t perfect, but people had a sort of intellectual rigour, any kind of overt sexism would have been ridiculed and frowned upon by everybody, not just females. Whereas I don’t think that was true for the larger scene. You know and this reverse thing, where if you were prancing around in makeup and high heels you would have been ‘so get over yourself’ you know – because we weren’t into that shit. So, it was good. I think Marissa Stirpe was really talented and outspoken, Denise Rosenberg as well. I’m trying to think.... Lisa as well yeah. I think it was a lot better for women. I think there was a lot of commitment to taking female voices very seriously, in all ways, you know not just performing.

So, you were taken seriously for your performance by the male contemporaries?

Oh yes. Totally.

So, what about the so-called riff and snobberies that was going on at one time in the scene where there was this north of the river, south of the river – you know – the Fitzroy versus the St. Kilda crew. What’s your perspective on that? Did it exist? Or is it just in people’s minds?

Oh, it existed. But I think it was exaggerated – it was glamourised. I think that some people saw themselves as more working class than people on the other side of the river – and that’s true. Yeah. I think it’s really a male thing but it’s a part of that kind of ethos.

I think the Fitzroy crew kind of put shit on the style and approach of the St. Kilda crew. I think that it’s a lot of old rubbish pretty much. I think that if any of that was viable then it’s something that some people enjoyed but its exaggerated, and I was never a part of it because I was friends with both. But yeah. Pretty dumb.

So, just talking about the fashion. You were around in the early Ballroom days where people would turn up in garbage bags and that sort of thing. What was your impression of that, and were you a part of that movement?

I really thought it was ridiculous. I really didn’t like it. I thought the garbage bags with the safety pins was really unoriginal, just copied straight out of NME. I just thought that was dumb, and I thought I was a lot better, quite frankly – fashion wise. Making up your own stuff of sort of...safety pins and garbage bags was kind of like... we thought those people were – they were dickheads, because that was just not thinking – that was copying from English magazines – and go – “oh you know I’m a punk!” It’s just a uniform.

So, what would you wear?

Oh, I had all these clothes that...I had this dress that would have zig-zag hems and ah...oh I had this fantastic jacket that had these like pottery hands sewn onto it – it was really beautiful, found on a grave and it's hard to remember.

Just very eclectic?

Yeah, but I would never, I would never in my wildest dreams wear a garbage bag and fishnets – you know – I'd rather look like a little boy than that. What was so liberating to walk around with garbage bags, fishnets and high heels? Because you can't move. So, I thought that was stupid.

But op-shopping was really big, wasn't it?

Oh yeah.

And going and getting old clothes really a lot of fifties and sixties clothes around in the op shop and people would take them and cut them up and doing all sorts of things with them. So that was really the creative thing, making your own fashion. So, the garbage bag look you thought was the stereo-typical thing you know, you are just copying – there's nothing original but yeah that's interesting.

Yeah. I thought they were dickheads. I really did or anyone that even calls themselves punk was a dickhead – I thought.

So, the word 'punk' wasn't really in use?

Oh God no.

Let's just say that you guys were part of a 'scene', whether you want to call it a punk scene or not, but that was kind of the name of the overall movement of the day, everyone termed everything as 'punk'. You are sort of saying that the people from The Little Bands scene never thought of themselves as being in the punk Scene? Or you personally? Let's just talk about you.

I would never... yeah...I think they would never either. I mean it was always a sort of try not to be part of the scene, because once it gets the name, then its exclusive. Once you chuck a name on it then it can be packaged, then it can be sold and then it can be fucked.

So, how do you feel thirty years later? People still referring to you guys as being in the punk scene?

I feel the same. I feel; Oh well it doesn't really matter what people call it, but it does in a way. I think if you miss that idea then you miss the whole. That's why I think that going back and re-living it is counterproductive because if you really had the idea today, you'd go and do something bloody different. You would say to yourself – Oh well whatever? I'm 40 so I'm allowed to do whatever I want! Do something else! Do something different but running back and sort of re-living it, it's not the same, it won't work.

You can't capture that time again, can you?

You can't, and it sort of fossilises it and it also fossilises the creative. Oh, look this is just me, you know". And I wouldn't do it, but I'm not saying that doing it is a bad thing, but it won't be as good and it won't sound really good. But I do definitely believe one thing; one of them is the nature of the capitalist system, that is once you name something, you can commodify it. And when you can commodify it, you can sell it. And that strips it from its original beauty and fluidity.

So, there was this thing called punk going on around you. What did you think punk was then at that time?

I remember first hearing about it and thinking this is good. You know when the **Sex Pistols** and all that shit came out, but it was a natural progression from **Patti Smith** you know. She was first and then there was **Television** and so it was a natural progression. Two months later and looking at the same sort of magazine and going "oh fuck! This is over!" Because it became a sort of prescribed language and people just had a uniform that they would wear. So, I thought "Nah! Not doing that!" And then you got bands like – you remember when **JAB** came? I was just laughing my head off. Because they were so... they had this dickhead, this real dickhead dumb guy that danced like this. They had some guy who had punk hair, they had the safety pins, they had the, "we're really stupid" sort of persona and stuff, and they hadn't thought about it at all. They hadn't given it a flying thought – they thought "Rockstar working class – that's us!" They hadn't questioned anything. So, they had this kind of 1950s lets be rockstars – here's the new outfit, here's the new sort of lyrics but nothing had changed. And having said that, look Bohdan was a great guy, really lovely to us, he was nice to us.

You could say the same thing about La Femme though.

Oh, you could say the same thing about all of them! They were shithouse! I couldn't stand them! They were just fucking stupid males, stupid boys who were really kind of offensive, trying to get a shag by being in bands that had all this kind of dick rock. So, I just thought they were crap. I had never gone to see La Femme. Only saw JAB by accident and I thought they were all shit, and they had just missed the whole point of anything. Because really, what was new?

So, they were just copying something that they had seen on TV?

I couldn't really see the difference between them and Sherbet except that the music was just a little bit faster and the outfit was different. The attitude was "I'm better than the audience. I'm a bloke, I've got a dick so that makes me better as well" (laughs). You know. What's so new about that? Nothing! Nothing except the outfits. I'm not saying that music has to be new, it doesn't.

So, did you think what the Little Bands were doing was new? And original and obviously, it was experimental at the time.

I thought it was good because of two things – it was experimental, no three things – because anybody and I mean everybody was allowed to have a go – you know? There were bands that had never really played before, and there were a lot of girls, and they felt that they really could have a go. It was really important to make people feel that they can really have a go. And that it was fluid and that it was impermanent, and that was different.

Did you feel that you were a part of a community in that sense?

Yeah, sort of. As much as I ever have which is not much. I'm not a very group joining person, you know what I mean, but yeah, sort of.

I've spoken to David Chesworth, and he actually said to me that there were some riffs going on between the Little Band Scene and the Clifton Hill Community Music Scene. I was under the original impression that the Clifton Hill Scene and the Little Band Scene were somewhat connected, but he was adamant that they weren't.

I wasn't in the scene by then. Yeah, I don't even remember him.

So, you were obviously going to see gigs at the Ballroom and all that at the same time as spending a lot of time in Fitzroy being in the Little Bands community. So, what's your perception of what was going on there?

Marie - I didn't spend a lot of time there, not really.

But you knew some of that crew really well.

Well, I was friends with Rowland S. Howard, and I was friends with Anita and Nick Cave a bit, so yeah sometimes I would go with Hugo Race and Genevieve McGuckin.

Did you like The Boys Next Door?

As a band?

Yeah, as a band.

No.

Is it because of the same reasons? Of the male orientated sort of band?

Marie - No. Not really. I really didn't like Nick's persona on stage. I'm sort of if I don't like something I don't pay attention. So, I didn't pay much attention to them. I didn't think they were terrible or something, they were my friends, especially Rowland.

But the music just didn't grab you?

I guess I just didn't give them enough respect to actually listen to them, to be perfectly honest. I didn't even listen to them.

So, what were you doing? Standing there and just talking to someone else?

Yeah, probably talking to someone. I'd have a bit of a look, but I didn't like their audience, I thought they were really dumb.

Did you think the audience were a little bit too cool for school?

Oh, I thought I was just too cool for anybody.

Ok. Right.

Marie - I thought that I was the coolest person on the planet.

Right. A big burden to carry Marie (both laugh).

Bloody oath it is. Not at the time. Looking back, I probably sort of did, you know...there were girls walking around you, I thought they were stupid. There was the real groupie scene.

So, you could be justified being called a Groupie in that scene if you're a female?

No, you couldn't. Because to me a Groupie is someone who roots people and loves them because they are in a band you know.

They were just fans.

No. A lot of them were real Groupies. I don't think that you could justify someone who knows someone and call them a Groupie you know. But they did have Groupies, well Nick had Groupies, I

wouldn't do that. But they did sort of shag Groupies and stuff. I used to think they were bloody idiots! All of them. **(Laughs)**. Yeah, Nick. I said, "you're a bloody idiot mate!"

While you were at the Ballroom. What were your impressions of the early days of The Ballroom? Some people say it was like Wonderland and you walk into a different world. What was your perception of the venue at the time?

It was ok. It was alright. I don't think it was Wonderland. But it was ok. I liked gigs that you organised yourself kind of thing. I really like those ones. You know when you get a hall and put everything on yourself or just get a vacant lot. You know vacant lot gigs are really good, but it was ok. I didn't think it was Wonderland.

What about parties? Do you have any fond memories of parties? Wild things happening at parties? Because I heard there were a lot of raiding people's fridges and smashing up the house and all that sort of hoo-ha.

Um...wild things.... Yeah, I guess there were a lot of that. I don't know. I remember some good parties in the vacant lot, with bonfires and things like that... um... I don't know. Parties were fun and there were a lot of parties. But I can't remember anything that stands out as wonderful you know. Raiding the fridges and making a mess is sort of par for the course, I think. Dancing! Yeah, there were a lot of dancing. I remember heaps of dancing. Especially this side of the river. There was this really strong kind of disco soul element going on at the same time, at parties and stuff. And lots of dancing. Yeah. That's what I remember most.

Did you go to Carlton? Did you go see any of the bands in Carlton? Like did you go to Hearts or Martinis?

Marie - No. I think I actually only went once or twice to Martinis. I think I went to see ...yeah, I remember it. It was in Rathdowne Street. No, because I went there a few times with Nick and Genevieve because they were playing there. This is very early and Pierre Voltaire had a band as well.

The Fabulous Marquees?

Yeah.

What were they like?

Oh, they weren't serious you know. They were pretty dumb. And ah, The Models

Did you like The Models?

Nah. **(Laughs)**. They were shit house. I couldn't stand them to be honest. They had this manager guy telling them what to wear, how to do their hair, we were just laughing our heads off at them. But you know its good natured.

So, who did you like?

Nobody.

Nobody except for the music you guys were making obviously you enjoyed that?

Yeah, pretty much. But I'm not very typical. **Primitive Calculators** were really awesome. Yeah, they were really good. And The **Birthday Party** were good. **Whirlyworld** were unreal. They were fantastic. Yeah, they were really good. They were quite a strange and unusual band.

You mentioned before that it was uncool at the time to sort of be famous because people thought that bands were selling out...

I think there was a feeling that if you did get popular or get anywhere then there was this idea that you were selling out. Now people who accused people of selling out were stupid because if they stuck to that ethos, they wouldn't want fame anyway. Now this is what I'm saying, now if there's any jealousy then it's not logical. But I think there is still that idea isn't there?

If you get famous you've sold out?

Yeah, if you get famous, you're selling out and somehow your music is not pure.

Yeah, there is still that idea.

It's pretty much rubbish in most cases but still in lots of cases, you're in it to get famous and that's fine too, you know, be honest.