

"I'D RATHER TRUST MY GUITAR THAN A GAL"

Rima Kashyap interviews the Combustibles, one of the groups who beat it hot at the JS Splashdown in Bombay.



It seemed like a minor invasion. Out of the lift emerged six figures in the craziest of clothes and the wildest of colours. They nearly exploded the office. Before anybody got the idea that it was being requisitioned for a hippy lair, I shuttled them into the dining room.

Around the table—singly seen, they even seemed respectable! As Everett Perry expounded: When we were interviewed by AIR the gentleman said we didn't look a beat group at all—we looked so respectable! Ahem. Everett's the vocalist (his God is Dylan), who got promoted from rhythm guitarist. "Like they couldn't get anyone to sing" he added wryly. After schooling at St. Michael's, Bombay, Everett began doing what he loves best. Composing. The four records the Combustibles have recorded: There's A Luv, Watch Her, No Piece of Mind, and Hey, Doc!, have all been written by him. The most serious about music in the group—he is a professional song-writer. "There's not much to sell here, so I'm sending them out". Twenty-five, medium height, bearded and gentle he's keen to do "something to help groups in

India get recognition"—start an organization which could help talents get together, etc. He's shy. Everett says: "I keep my hair long to keep the girls away. I'd rather trust my guitar than a gal." He's had theoretical training in music: studied the piano till the Intermediate stage.

Tall, thin, flowing-locks and a moustache and you have the drummer of the Combustibles: Bobby "Boo" Furtado. (The "Boo's" for booze explained their manager—he doesn't have any!) The quietest of the lot—the other guys hardly gave the poor boy a chance to speak for himself. School? Embarrassed grin: "I chucked it up". So soft that I had to ask him to repeat it. "He wuz chucked out because he started drumming in class. Ho ho" (added one of 'em). Nineteen years old, he started drumming three years back with amateur groups before he joined the group. He wants to "make it big" as a professional drummer—like Ginger Baker of The Cream who's his idol. Softspoken Boo takes a lot of ragging from the group ("tell a joke in Churchgate and Boo starts laughing at Banda") but he enjoys it.

Babyfaced George Taylor is fair, small, light-eyed and unpunctual. The originator of the group, which started off in 1966 (just after the Jetliners and Trojans) . . . kept low in between . . . and now hits like a ton of bricks. A bass player who began playing at St. Joseph's, Bangalore five years ago. He works with his father in manufacturing surgical cotton. The group is "strictly part-time" for him . . . it started off with his brother, and him being joined by a cousin who sang, with friends of friends joining in to form the original group. Of them only the brothers remain. George's referred to as Reggiekins for reasons fathomable. He likes to play "like himself". Would have loved to continue at St. Xavier's College, Bombay, but Inter Science was too much for him.

The Archiekins of the group is George's kid brother, Lionel Taylor. Twenty (a year younger than George), very 'kicky' and independent, he is the lead guitarist but

"plays all the others, sings, and also plays the fool". Besides being the most versatile and volatile of the group, he "helps around" at Uncle Leo's workshop where he is learning the mechanics of making a guitar and other instruments. For lack of any other serious interests he intends to make music a profession like his idol—Eric Clapton of The Cream.

Every group has its intellectual and 20-year-old Nissim Ezekiel, the rhythm guitarist is the Combustibles' egghead. From St. Xavier's School, Bombay he is now studying for his M.A. in Economics from the college of the same name. The lawyer of the band intends to study management and end up as an executive. Clean, long hair brushed shiny, Nissim is undoubtedly the gentleman. Playing with the Combustibles since 1969 he began playing a few years ago after a trip to the USA where he bought a guitar.

Any interview with the Combustibles is incomplete without a mention of their "manager"—the voluble, wisecracking, goodnatured and modest Godfrey Uttanwalla. An ex-golf pro at the Willingdon Club, Bombay, Godfrey tried his hand at many things including hairdressing and interior decoration before his love for music led to his 'managing' the Combustibles. Himself a keen guitarist he played with The Streetlamps before his marriage. Offstage he's very much in evidence adjusting speakers, negotiating contracts and improving the tone and quality of their music.

Right now they're playing their best, he says, because they form a well-knit and practised group. Their favourite beat groups are The Cream, Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple but they think Bombay audiences prefer "bubblegum" (things like 'Sugar, Sugar') to acid rock. Last year the Combustibles played in Kathmandu at the Soaltees Hotel (to a bow-and-tie crowd) but wowed the hippies at the Park Hotel there. In Calcutta, immediately after, they were on at Trinca's before they shifted to Three Coins in Poona and at the fag end of their journey to Blow Up, Blue Nile and Talk of the Town in Bombay.

SPOT THE JS GIRLS AND BOYS



A JS girl and JS boy, switched every day, will be going round the Bombay Fiesta organized jointly by the Maharashtra State Women's Council and JS. The Fiesta is being held at Sree Niketan Gardens.

The girls will be sporting special JS scarves and the boys will be in trendy Liberty shirts. You can identify them from their photographs published alongside.

Go up and introduce yourself and, if you are among the first six to do so, win yourself a free six-month subscription to JS.