

# **3XY OR I DIE**

**a portrait of cabaret-punk artist Ron Rude**

**(1978 - 1981)**

**By Kieran Carroll  
2/34 Keith Ave  
Edithvale 3196  
Melbourne  
Tel: 97731210  
kierancarroll@hotmail.com**

**3XY OR I DIE** opened in September 2001 at the Duke of Windsor Hotel, Prahran. In 2002, the play won Best Original Production at the Melbourne Fringe Festival. In 2003, the play had a third Melbourne season at the St.Kilda Memorial Hall directed by Lynne Ellis. The 2001 and '02 seasons were directed by Kieran Carroll and E Lawrence.

**Ron Rude** played by Mark E Lawrence

**The Band:**

(2001) – Karen Anson (Keyboards)  
Tony Cornish (Bass)  
Jim Shaw (Guitar)  
Dan Hawkins (Drums)

(2002) – Karen Anson (Keyboards)  
Christian Bennett (Guitar)  
Tony Cornish (Bass)  
Troy Parker (Drums)

(2003) - Karen Anson (Keyboards)  
Christian Bennett (Guitar)  
Tony Cornish (Bass)  
Troy Parker (Drums)  
Jim Shaw (Guitar)

## ACT 1

### SCENE 1

*A rock gig. The band is on stage ready to play. Enter Ron Rude.*

DRUMMER: I like Rude's formidable sneer!

BASSIST: Rude lets the bull out of Belgrave and lets a strong sound free

KEYBOARDIST: Is every man in Belgrave as cute?

GUITARIST: Rude is what Melbourne has always needed, the Reg Livermore of punk. Let's go! One, two, three four!

*Ron Rude and The Unforgettables play 'Sixteen In Melbourne'.*

R.R: Thank you, goodnight and if you thought the Unforgettables were forgettable, you can stand on your heads for all I care.

**Ron Rude is at home on the phone.**

R.R: Is that Juke magazine? Ah hello, it's Ron Rude here. I've just started up a band called Ron Rude and The Unforgettables. Would your publication be interested in doing an article on us? What's unique about us? Well, I don't know....um, um, yeah, bye. (*Puts phone down*) Why couldn't I tell him what my band is like? A drummer dressed as Darth Vader, a guitarist who plays with his teeth, a bass player who eats three pizzas while on a stage and a keyboardist who spends her days making Sid Vicious dolls. Last night, we blew it in St.Kilda. I wanted to yell at the band: 'Never leave your bedrooms again, you hear me, never leave your bedrooms again.' Sure there was people there, thirty Belgrave hippies with their arms outstretched thinking it's Woodstock or something, tripping on magic mushies. And behind them, the usual Ballroom crowd. A few of the Boys Next Door come out to have a look, so the rest of the crowd think, Rowland and Nick are watching, this must be alright. But as soon as they disappear, so do the rest of them. I just felt like heaving all those hippies one by one into a large army truck and telling the driver to drop them off somewhere like Puckapunyal and leave them their to rot in their own body odours. Then, I felt like telling all those pretentious losers at the back to start making their own decisions on what and what shouldn't be watched, to start developing some taste of their own. Maybe, I should have gone to England and formed a band with Alfie Protocol. No, Alfie couldn't even

play even though he thought his demos were going to be bigger than The Beatles! I'll never forget the night he was doing some recording with me and as we listened back, I could see this look of deluded self-satisfaction come over his face. I knew he thought stardom beckoned. Then he said: 'Hey Ron, could you lend me a dollar for the train trip back to me Mum's?'

***Ron Rude turns back to the band. They are in Hobart, backstage. The band are fidgety and distracted.***

R.R: Listen, you lot, this is no ordinary city. This is Hobart, Van Diemen's Land and we are no ordinary pub band. Let's keep the mystery here and stay behind the curtain. Do you remember when you went to your first big concert as a kid: the anticipation, your legs aching, somebody's elbow crunching the back of your scone. Then the first chord hits, BANG, everybody's off! We are the same admittance price as a big budget Hollywood feature so lets go out there and convert the musically starved.

***Band play: I Love You, You***

*Blackout*

## SCENE 2

*Ron Rude sits with a record player, a teddy bear, a transistor and copies of his albums beside him.*

R.R: 3XY the station we all grew up with. I'm gonna be here on a hunger strike in the window of this shop, Missing Link Records, for as long as it takes to get my record played on 1422 3XY. My personable visits to 3XY have yielded little encouragement. The station's musical director grabbed me by the throat and said 'You're causing us a few problems Ron Rude. We're not even playing the latest Jon English record, why would we play you?' Well I know all the flimsy excuses they could throw at my feet but there are certain parameters that must be broken down, in Melbourne, now. I want to hear The Birthday Party on 3XY! And it's gonna take a pest, a public act, Belgrave's public nuisance NO 1! 3XY needs a Ron Rude record on the air! Or someone else like...TSK TSK TSK or (*Rude coughs twice*). I wish I had of thought of those band names. This hunger strike won't worry me. Most of my friends are on a kind of permanent hunger strike anyway. I haven't seen Martin Ridiculous eat anything but Scotch Finger biscuits since 1975. There's also a rumour going around that I'm having an affair

with Kate Bush. I'm in no hurry to deny it. (*Rude does some light exercises in his chair.*) I think there'll be some warm sun later. Pity the goths! The Bible Society from across the road have been over with cheerful pamphlets that carry a lot of encouragement: 'He who seeks the Lord will never be hungry' and 'Christ is the most important food for life'. I've just been talking to this journalist from the Herald who sent that he wanted to interview me but that the story mightn't be newsy enough. Newsy enough? The first hunger strike in rock'n'roll not newsy enough! Yet these papers run articles like 'Mona Fonebone opens cooking classes in Lower Templestowe' or 'Reggie Fotheringham walks on Sth Melbourne beach each day for forty years with his bunch of struggling greyhounds' or 'Joy Brammel found her upper moler in a packet of crumpets' Not newsy enough, my God. One thing hunger strikes do is give you a lot of time to think about what you've done, what you're trying to do and what you want do. Today, I've worked out all the things I want to find in my music. You see, growing up I listened to Arlo Guthrie and John Mayall then I studied electronic music on those old EMS synthesizers. I liked Bartok and John Cage and George Crumb. At Discurio, they'd say 'Here comes the guy who is looking for music to die by!' If 3XY haven't played my record within 48 hours, I'm going to drown myself in a bucket of water, yes that's right - drown myself in a bucket of water, in the studios of 3XY, in front of Hans Christian and Barry Bissell. I want a whole song played - or death by drowning. 3XY or I Die!

Band rehearsals never change. People aren't late all the time when they work in a bank or work for the council as garbage collectors but it's as if being a musician in an obscure band gives you a little licence certificate to say - Never be on time. Stress out and annoy the head of the band by never calling. Cancel at the last minute. I mean, I may have wanted to do other things today. I may have wanted to go boating! Do you think that's possible now?

I suppose I can go back and try to mix all this stuff I've been recording. I want to bring out a compilation album and call it 'From Belgrave With Love'. There's The Ears, The Fabulous Marquises, Lisa Gerrard. All these bands I've recorded need

to have their stuff put out there. It may not be big now but it's gonna have some lasting value later on. We've all just got to keep working at it and the only way that will happen is if people start turning up to rehearse! Simple, elementary but for very vague reasons so so difficult!

(Band appear)

- Look 2PM doesn't mean 7PM. Lets just play something very old for fun. Something you probably don't even know (laughs). Lets do 'Digging My Grave'.

Rude - Well that could only be said to be somewhere between an absolute shambles and a cacophony of brilliance! Okay, lets get it going!

'Sandringham trains always feel fine,  
Frankston trains are never on my mind,  
Altona trains go crack, crack, crack,  
Alamein on a Sunday undeniably slack,  
What about Upwey? What about Epping? What about Hurstbridge for a setting?

Belgrave, London, Paris, Munich - everybody talk about pop music  
Montrose, Sassafra, Clayton, Bonbeach -everybody talk about Rude music

They've gotta do something about suburban train trips. Trips to Frankston or Belgrave or Hurstbridge aren't much shorter than going to Ballarat or Geelong, are they? I've often thought they should have a carriage that just has beds and another that's a dining car. And maybe, they've gotta get music happening in the back carriage. I should write to the public transport powers that be and see if the band could on the last train home on a Saturday night. I can picture the scene: people in various states of lethargy and drunkenness, footy fans mixing with an assortment of punks hip swinging to 'Orgasm On a Saturday night' (Band starts song)

Ron Rude is standing on a chair peering over a fence in a white terry towelling hat.

I've just been given the official 3XY figures. They didn't play a whole song. They play excerpts. They had a phone in. 61 callers gave their opinion. 40 disliked it immensely. 20 thought it was tolerable to interesting to good, and one woman said it was ruining the health of her budgerigar.

Molly Meldrum's in there. This is his place over here. It's time to confront the barometer of public pop taste. How did this man get to where he is? Who had the idea of letting him have a television show? I've got a couple of Donnie Sutherland records at home from the 60's. They're terrible but at least he had a go. Did Molly?

Okay, so when he comes out and says 'What are you doing chained to my fence, do yourself a favour and get lost.' I'm gonna put my hand on Molly's shoulder, tell him to sit down on the nature strip and relax and then badger him for awhile about the some of the pap that appears on his show. Then, I'll tell him Channel 9 and Channel 7 are coming to cover my story.

Is that Gavin Wood coming down the street? It's probably the weekly Tuesday afternoon drinking session at Ian's place. Who else might arrive? JPY, Ted Mulry, Dazza Braithwaite, those thugs from The Radiators arm in arm with Christie 'you give me goose bumps' Allen!

Oh hi Gavin. What, he's out getting a suit for The Logies. Can't I just come in for one G & T?

All band members are lying around the floor by Ron Rude except for a friend of Ron's who is hearing the story.

R.R - Hey Mick buy us a beer will you and I'll tell about this party.

Mick: I'm always buying...

R.R - I went to Paul Hester's 21st last Saturday. He's the drummer in my band, just joined actually. The more I think about it, the more I think he's got pop star written

all over him. Anyway, the party's in Auburn, one of those suburbs that nobody actually ever seems to mention. So my band are all there to play, past and present members and loads of other people from different groups and Paul's parents or somebody caring has supplied the rabble with things like rissoles and cocktail savoyes and savoyes with straz and cheese and even green olives, all very enjoyable and essential in our varying degrees of share house malnutrition. The Boys Next Door were playing somewhere in Richmond and there was rumour that they were gonna turn up which didn't please Stuart too much as he's never been able to stand them.

Anyway, I was having a good time, dancing and talking to people. My back up singers were there, Yelena and Marianna, who Alfie Protocol calls 'the pizza order gone wrong'!

But the most curious guest of all at the party was Leigh Matthews, the captain of Hawthorn. Firstly, he was the only one showing any arm hair, the only one who would dare consider a moustache, and the only one who suggested an Eagles record for the turntable. What he was doing there, I have no idea. Not even Stuart seemed to know him. It was as if the party required an eastern suburban mascot and who better than the captain of Glenferrie Rd. The party seemed to get noisier and noisier and Leigh didn't seem like he needed an early night. Someone had got the backyard hose and was circling the house doing window cleaning, a couple of other lanky chaps got hold of a motor mower and I was watching them out on the street doing people's nature strips yelling 'Must get an early start! Must get an early start!'

Anyway it must have been 3 or 4 by this time and in come the Boys Next Door.

They, of course, head straight for the food table and polish off everything in sight. I don't know if our birthday boy had a word to Leigh Matthews but after a few minutes when they were all just getting settled, and I kid you not, I saw Leigh Matthews pick up Nick Cave, hold him above his head like he was a Sherrin footy and hurl him like a piece of rock onto the street. Matthew then came back inside and was on the lookout for further band members but they'd escaped out the back. So I went up to Matthews and said: 'Just because you're a home owner in Dingley, you've got no right to injure members of important Melbourne bands.' Matthews laughed and introduced himself formally and I went into a rave about how tough it is to be hopeless at football in an area like Belgrave. I asked Leigh if he wanted to dance. I said 'C'mon Leigh, you guys do it arm in arm every week after a big win'. He laughed, shook my hand, said his goodbyes then said 'Hey Rodney, how about you and me go for a spin in this Ferrari I've got from a sponsor. I said 'Sure Lewis' and before too long Leigh's doing 150 along Barkers Rd and pulling off burn outs in side streets and laughing like a man who knows he's beyond the law. 'Let me out Lethal, just let me out' I cried but I was just an evening punching bag in his chops and linament world. He finally dumped me like a first gamer up at the top end of Cotham Rd and I staggered for about a mile and a half back to the party, into a spare room where I woke up with my snoring bass player beside me and my nose in a Salada biscuit. I tell you Mick, it's one for The Truth!



You know, I don't sell a lot of records. But the odd fan appears from time to time, and the fact that you've put out a couple of records and played live can save your skin. I've got this new girlfriend, Molly, who lives with her friend Jackie in Nth Fitzroy.

So life's been going well for Molly and me. She's a Dresden War Crimes fan. So last night, I'm around at Molly's and we're in her room just getting ready to settle in for the night. We've turned the light off when all of a sudden, we hear these noises from the lounge and kitchen. Jackie's screaming insults at her boyfriend and it sounds like plates and windows are smashing, couches are getting upturned and holes are being punched in the wall. Now I'd seen Jackie's boyfriend before. He's a 7ft punk ape, the type of guy that stands right up the front at gigs and blocks the view of thirty people behind him. Before long, Jackie's run into our room, closed the door behind her and suggested that I go out there and pacify him. Molly takes my arm and says 'He could kill you Ron.' I say 'Thanks.' So I go out into the corridor and standing at the other end of it is Tony, his head almost touching the ceiling, his shirt off and only one boot on. So this ugly behemoth starts lumbering down the corridor towards me and I'm thinking - final curtain call Mr Rude.

Finally and it seems that's it taken him hours to get to me, he looks down at me and in hushed reverent tones says: 'Oh Ron, sorry to disturb you, look I'll pay for the damages. That was a great gig last week. Tell Jackie I'll call her. See ya around.'

So I strut back into the bedroom, a victory for the little man achieved, looking forward now to jumping into bed with Molly. I enter the room and Molly says: 'Ron, Jackie's very upset. She should stay in here tonight and you take her bed.' 'But, I've just saved all our lives and is that my reward, the sheets the punk ape's been frequenting!' 'Don't argue with me Ron.' I didn't. I walked up to the other bedroom which was in pieces and went to sleep. Then, I wake up: shivering, sweating, and looking out the window, I see the punk ape. He taps on the window and says 'Let me in Ron? I've lost the keys to my place. I've got nowhere else to go. I can't stand out here all night.'

So I get up and the punk ape pushes past me and says: 'I'll take Jackie's room. And before I can answer, he's spread across the bed, blankets up to chin. I head out into the lounge and put the couch back in it's rightful place. There's no blankets around, so I turn on the heater and lay down beside that. I'm innocent, I've played the major part in the peace process, the United Nations would be having a celebratory dinner in my honour and at the end of it all, I haven't even got a blanket to get under while the behemoth's

curled up expecting me to bring him his breakfast in bed tomorrow. Whoever wrote 'The Things We Do For Love' should hire me as a publicist!

Dissonance,  
darkness,  
intensity,  
extreme departures,  
total freedom,  
contrapuntal melodies,  
Tallahassee tuning like on Lou Reed's '65 classic 'The Ostrich',  
harmonic drone progressions,  
sonic freedom,  
dark romantic lyrics,  
let it rock sometimes,  
make it melodic but eccentric,  
give me my yak horns, I want my yak horns, those Tibetan dun-chen bass horns  
that are used to welcome visiting monks coming up the mountains. That's what  
I want from a keyboard player!

I don't believe in rock'n'roll per se, make it an element but don't treat it with  
evangelical fervor.

Marry it all with a hairdo, titian with the three calvary spikes, black lipstick,  
throw in a teddy bear for company every now and then. Let my local op shop dress  
me sincerely. Try to make it nameless, so when people ask 'What was that?' , the  
other person can reply 'I don't know but I liked it!' Don't just follow fashion or wait  
around for people to do things for you. Use a Bankcard! If you can see something  
redeeming in The Eagles let me know! Keep recording, documenting, don't rest on  
one idea too long.

I know some people mightn't like me. I'm sure some people think I should stay in  
Belgrave for good and never be allowed out. I'm sure some people think I'm a funny

guy and that some of my songs are reasonably inventive. But that doesn't mean criticism doesn't sting. Clinton Walker in a recent issue of RAM magazine said 'I was a better man behind the desk than in front of it.' Read: Ron Rude's heart is in the right place. He's a doing a good job recording all these other interesting people but he's not that interesting himself. He seemed to really dislike the 'quirky theatricality' of The Vorpall Blade. It's 'jerky' rhythms. He said I relented to Big Macs during the hunger strike and 3XY never played the record. Well I count the excerpts as airplay. At times like this I think of a Kingsley Amis quote: 'A bad review might spoil your breakfast but it should certainly never ruin your lunch.'

Now look I know I'm not a great singer. I'm a reasonable guitarist when I play. I think my lyrics are improving. I didn't set out to be some alternative celebrity. Walker seemed to think it was most uncool and incredibly vain to put myself on the cover of 'The Vorpall Blade'. Well fuck him. I wrote it, played it, recorded it, paid for it, and put it out on my own label, Unforgettable Music, who the hell does he think should be on the front cover - Peter Couchman! Stuart Wagstaff!

Long train trips back and forth, Belgrave to the city, helped all this along. Somewhere I became caught in the whirl of a day job, seeing bands at night and returning home to do my own stuff and inbetween all this there seemed to be hundreds of other trapped lives under red sloping roofs; the views I'd take in each morning and night.

I needed to find something unconcerned with morning papers, coffee scrolls and the early train home. So music became the tonic but ironically I needed the day job more than ever to buy equipment, record, buy records. Work made strange sense, not that I mind an unemployed sabbatical either!

I've often thought that the house in Belgrave would embrace some sort of Warholian mentality but so many people are in love with the idea but don't want to do a skerrick of their own stuff to get the ball rolling. I don't need any more junkies raiding my fridge for a chop! You don't have to guess where the song 'Lets rob a chemist' came from either! What did Warhol do with the bills? The hangers on just annoy me, tire me fucking out, and in the end they just drag down the worthwhile people.

The lines blur for me sometimes. Ambition with a good time packed in, seriousness with a sense of self-deprecation. I want the kids of Geelong to pick up some of these four tracks in twenty, thirty years time and make home recordings.

A few days ago they had a bomb threat at 3XY, somebody threatening to blow up the building if their request wasn't played. I never wanted my light-hearted exploits to encourage killing people just as I never intended for Molly Meldrum to hate me.

I just wanted to startle Melbourne a bit, create some gentle unease.

I don't know if I can keep all of this up. Maybe soon, I'll retreat. Maybe, I'll just make recordings in very, very limited editions. Call them 'semi-private releases'. Maybe I'll learn badminton and become an instructor on a ship, sip pina coladas on stop overs in the Carribean, maybe I'll go out dancing with Leigh Matthews, maybe I'll tour Victoria by bicycle and play acoustically in bowling clubs, maybe I'll start a chess club. I just don't want to stagnate - ever!

So you see, that's what Ron Rude is - a story, a Belgrave to Melbourne adventure...return of course...

Band member: Hey Ron, why don't we play 'Piano Piano' one more time and call it a night?

R.R - Yeah, yeah, coming, coming. Now that's what I like Stevie. Order me around! Order me around! And I've got a new line for the choruses that I'm finally happy with.

Band member: What's the line Ron?

R.R - 'The things that you strive for a better than nothing' - 1234

Band plays - Piano Piano