

SPLIT ENZ

*“Years ago in an Auckland flat
This odyssey began
Motivates me still
Northward I’m bound
Haul away, haul away, haul away.”*
(Haul Away – Tim Finn)

In October 1972 in Auckland, New Zealand, Brian Timothy Finn (vocals, piano), Phil Judd (guitar, vocals), Jonathan Michael (Mike) Chunn (bass), Miles Golding (violin) and Mike Howard (flute) formed a five-piece acoustic group called Split Ends.

Judd worked on lyrics, Finn provided the melodies while Golding provided a classical background. The result was an eclectic mixture unlike anything else being produced in New Zealand at the time.

The group recorded their first single *For You/Split Ends* in February 1973, and shortly after Golding left to study in London. After Golding’s departure Mike Chunn urged the band to take an electronic direction and Geoff Chunn (drums), Paul Wally Wilkinson (guitar) and Rob Gillies (saxophone, trumpet) were added to the lineup. The seven piece commenced a small tour of Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington supporting John Mayall.

In late 1973 the band entered a NZ television talent contest called *New Faces*. Despite high expectations the band were to come second last. Their appearance made a favourable impression with some however, and they secured a 30-minute concert special for Television New Zealand. In a patriotic gesture the band chose at this time to change their name from Split Ends to Split Enz and in November 1973 the group released their second single *129/ Sweet Talking Spoon Song*.

In 1974 Anthony Edward (Eddie) Rayner (keyboards), Noel Crombie (percussion and art director), and Paul Emlyn Crowther (drums) joined the band while Geoff Chunn and Rob Gillies left. Eddie Rayner, nicknamed ‘The Prof’ added another facet to the band, helping enhance and polish their arrangements.

Crombie brought to the band a visual element that many feel helped differentiate Split Enz from their contemporaries and helped to set them onto their path to ultimate success. Working with the band’s individual musical style he developed colourful costumes, crazy hairstyles, makeup, sets and special effects that drew on a diverse range of influences such as the circus, gothic horror, cinema, pantomime, surrealism and modern art. From a musical side his spoon solos were to become a favourite with audiences at the band’s shows.

In 1975 Split Enz released their third single *No Bother To Me* which was received well by their fast developing NZ fan base. The consensus at the time was that if the band were to breakthrough they needed to move into a bigger fish bowl. So the band set off for Australia.

Initially the band didn't fair well in Australia, failing to find a niche in the predominantly 'pub rock' culture of the time. They refused to give in though and stuck out nine months of hard times developing a small but loyal following. Around this time they were discovered by Mushroom Music head Michael Gudinski who signed them to management, publishing and recording deals.

Through their association with Mushroom and Gudinski the band quickly secured support slots with bands such as Skyhooks, Roxy Music, Lou Reed, Flo & Eddie, and Leo Sayer.

In 1975 Split Enz recorded their debut album *Mental Notes*, which went on to chart in the Top 20 in Australia and Top 10 in New Zealand. After undergoing some further lineup changes (Wally Wilkinson departed and Rob Gillies returned) the band kicked off their 'Enz Of The Earth' Australian tour.

Shortly after the completion of the tour the single *Late Last Night* was released along with a promotional video directed by Noel, which helped secure priceless exposure on hit TV show *Countdown*. Show host Molly Meldrum loved them and over the years they frequently appeared, becoming a firm favourite of the show.

Split Enz's tour with Roxy Music had led to Roxy Music's guitarist Phil Manzanera extending an offer to produce their follow up album in London. After securing a UK record deal with Chrysalis they departed for the UK to record *Second Thoughts*.

As with Australia, UK audiences at first struggled to appreciate the band's individual style. In time though they won the cult following they'd enjoyed in both New Zealand and Australia. In November Emlyn Crowther departed the group and Malcolm Green, the group's first non-Kiwi joined as drummer.

In 1977 the Enz returned to Australia and New Zealand for their *Courting The Act* tour. They then headed to the States to support their first US album release. The promo tour was to be the end of the line for Phil Judd and Mike Chunn, with the founding members leaving the band.

With a UK tour fast approaching Tim replaced Mike Chunn with English bassist Nigel Griggs and Phil Judd with his younger brother Neil Finn.

In the same year Split Enz released *Dizrythmia*, which gave them their first Top 20 single *My Mistake*, while the album went Top 20 in Australia and Top 5 in New Zealand.

In 1978 the band continued to tour through the UK and Europe. Rob Gillies left and Phil Judd returned briefly but departed shortly after. Late that year the band recorded their next album *Frenzy*. The album and its promotion marked a shift from their past crazy costumes and makeup. In Australia this change was further highlighted musically by the release of hit single *I See Red* which saw the band shifting to a more accessible style of high energy pop. The band began to perform under their own personas and Noel's costumes, album and set designs took on more simple geometric designs.

1980 and the release of *True Colours* saw Neil Finn emerge as a songwriting force alongside his brother Tim. The mixture of Tim and Neil's strong writing on the album shot it to the top of the charts, where it remained for ten weeks, selling over 250,000 copies in Australasia. The album was a defining point for the band, marking their shift to the 'big time'.

Their subsequent album, named *Corroboree* in Australia and *Waiata* elsewhere, also shot to the #1 album chart spot in Australia and New Zealand, producing hits *One Step Ahead* and *History Never Repeats*.

Mid 1981 saw the departure of Mal Green to work on solo projects and Noel took over the role of band drummer when the band undertook a world tour. They returned to the studio late that year.

In April 1982 Split Enz released *Time & Tide* and saw it head straight to the number one spot in both Australia and New Zealand. It was to be their third successive number one album and was illustrative of the band's iconic status in both countries. Singles *Dirty Creature* and *Six Months In A Leaky Boat* went Top Ten and Top 5 respectively.

Split Enz finished up a massive year with the release of their 'best of' album *Enz Of An Era* which went Top Ten in Australia.

At the start of 1983 Tim decided to record a solo album *Escapade* and took a break from Split Enz. His absence delayed the follow up to *Time & Tide* and many consider this was the beginning of the end for the band. A new single *Next Exit* was released to carry them over to the album release but failed to chart.

In Tim's absence Neil took on the role of primary contributor and the band released *Conflicting Emotions* in late 1983. The album charted in the Top 20 and produced the hit single *Message To My Girl* which charted in the Top 10.

For the subsequent tour the band introduced Paul Hester on drums and Noel returned to percussion and spoons. During the course of the tour it became increasingly apparent that Tim wanted to strike out on his own and in June 1984 he announced his departure from Split Enz.

The band decided, to the surprise of many, to continue on without Tim and released *See Ya 'Round* in November 1984 and the subsequent hit single *I Walk Away*. By the time of its release, however, the announcement had been made. Split Enz were to break up and they embarked on their farewell *Enz With A Bang* tour of Australia and New Zealand. Their last show was on December 4, 1984 in Auckland – fittingly, where it had all begun. A double live album *The Living Enz* was released in 1985.

Since Split Enz split there have been occasional reformations. In 1989 they undertook an Australian reunion tour; in 1992 they performed a one-off show in Sydney and in 1993 they celebrated their twentieth anniversary with an Australasian tour. Most recently the band performed for a one-off millennium concert in New Zealand and once again at their ARIA Hall Of Fame induction in 2005.

June 2006 will see Split Enz add another page to their already extensive career history as they embark on a major venue five city Australian tour.

Split Enz Lineup over the years
In alphabetical order

Mike Chunn (bass) 1972-77
Noel Crombie (spoons, percussion, drums, visual design) 1972-84
Emlyn Crowther (drums) 1972-76
Neil Finn (vocals, guitar, keyboards) 1977-84
Tim Finn (vocals, piano, guitar) 1972-84
Robert Gillies (reeds) 1975-77
Miles Golding (violin) 1972-73
Malcolm Green (drums) 1976-81
Nigel Griggs (bass) 1976-84
Paul Hester (drums) 1983-84
Mike Howard (flute) 1972-73
Philip Judd (vocals, guitar, mandolin) 1972-77, 1978
Eddie Rayner (keyboards) 1972-84
Wally Wilkinson (guitar) 1972-75