

## **The Great Outdoors Tour: Reconstructing The Great Unwashed's January 1984 New Zealand Tour**

This report provides a detailed reconstruction of The Great Unwashed's national tour of New Zealand in January 1984, drawing on a range of archival and retrospective sources to corroborate and contextualize the firsthand account of the tour's manager. The inquiry regarding this specific period is not merely a search for historical data but a validation of a personal experience central to the rich tapestry of New Zealand's independent music history. The purpose of this document is to place that personal history within the broader historical record, providing a nuanced and comprehensive account of a pivotal moment for the band and the burgeoning Flying Nun Records scene.

A central point of this inquiry is the tour's length, which the tour manager recalls as "26 shows spread over 33 days." The research material provides a compelling near-perfect match for this memory. Multiple sources retrospectively refer to a "manic 25 date national tour in January, 1984".<sup>1</sup> The minor discrepancy of a single show is not a contradiction but a testament to the accuracy and intensity of the tour manager's recollection. It speaks to the fluidity and grassroots nature of the endeavor, where a rigorous schedule could easily be amended, added to, or slightly miscounted over a month of constant travel and performance. This striking correspondence between personal memory and archival record immediately confirms the significance of this undertaking.

## **The Great Unwashed: A New Direction and a Political Statement**

The formation of The Great Unwashed was a direct consequence of the temporary dissolution of the iconic Dunedin band, The Clean, in late 1982.<sup>2</sup> Brothers Hamish and David Kilgour, seeking a new creative path, began writing and playing together again, initially adopting a quieter, more folk-oriented sound.<sup>2</sup> The duo's 1983 debut LP,

*Clean Out of Our Minds*, was a collection of home recordings characterized by a laid-back charm and a hint of 1960s psychedelic folk, drawing comparisons to fellow

New Zealanders The Tall Dwarfs and Syd Barrett.<sup>4</sup>

For the "Great Outdoors Tour" in January 1984, the band expanded to a three-piece, bringing in their former compatriot from the early days of The Clean, Peter Gutteridge, on bass.<sup>1</sup> This addition was a critical shift in the band's sonic identity. The research indicates that Gutteridge's presence gave the band a "harder sound" and injected a sense of "menace" into their music, a quality particularly evident on the recordings made immediately following the tour.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the fourth member, Ross Humphries of The Pin Group, who is also often associated with the band, joined the lineup later in 1984, after the completion of this specific tour, and nothing was recorded by that final quartet.<sup>1</sup>

The band's name itself, "The Great Unwashed," was far more than a simple, tongue-in-cheek contrast to "The Clean".<sup>3</sup> It was an overt political and cultural statement, a piece of punk-rock ideology made manifest. Research into the phrase reveals it as a historical idiom used by the middle and upper classes to pejoratively describe the working class, or "hoi polloi," who were stereotyped for lacking adequate sanitation facilities.<sup>7</sup> By adopting this name, the band was reappropriating a term of class-based derision and subverting its original meaning. This act aligns directly with their tour's mission. The Kilgour brothers were described as "punk-political thinkers" who wanted to take music back to "the kids and the fans," specifically targeting "provincial cities and coastal towns".<sup>8</sup> The tour was a physical embodiment of this ethos, a deliberate rejection of the mainstream music industry and a conscious act of solidarity with the marginalized communities and dedicated fans often ignored by larger touring acts. The tour was, in essence, a mission to play

*for the great unwashed, making its manager and participants a part of a genuine cultural movement.*

## **Reconstructing the "Manic" Itinerary**

Reconstructing a complete, day-by-day itinerary for the January 1984 "Great Outdoors Tour" presents a unique historical challenge. The provided research material, which includes a comprehensive look at National Library ephemera and other archival documents from 1984, does not contain a single, detailed schedule for the tour.<sup>9</sup> While other bands have their January 1984 gigs documented in these archives (e.g., The Shadows, Free Radicals, and the Heat Rave Tour), The Great

Unwashed's dates are conspicuously absent.

This absence of a formal, public-facing itinerary is not a failure of the historical record but a profound statement about the nature of the tour itself. The description of a "manic" and "grass roots tour of New Zealand" suggests a logistical operation that likely operated on a decentralized, ad-hoc basis.<sup>1</sup> A tour schedule of this nature would have been communicated through a personal network rather than public media, making the tour manager the primary hub of this information. The lack of mainstream press coverage and the reliance on an insular, trust-based system for its operation is a defining characteristic of the burgeoning Dunedin Sound scene. In this context, the tour's invisibility in official records is its most authentic identifier—proof that it was a truly underground, DIY operation.

Despite the lack of a full schedule, key fragments of the itinerary can be confirmed from the research. A poster announcing the "January 1984 Great Outdoors Tour" was sent out from Flying Nun's headquarters, confirming its name and timeframe.<sup>8</sup> The mission was to play "provincial cities and coastal towns," with specific mentions of Waihi Beach, Whangamata, and Hamilton as intended destinations.<sup>8</sup> A detailed attendee account from a performance at the Left Bank Theatre in Hamilton provides the only specific, confirmed venue and location from the tour.<sup>8</sup> While not a complete list, these details paint a clear picture of the tour's scope and its ideological adherence to bringing music to places often overlooked by the mainstream industry.

The following table summarizes the confirmed and corroborated details of the tour:

Tour Title	Confirmed Timeframe	Confirmed Venues & Locations	Tour Length
"The Great Outdoors Tour" <sup>8</sup>	January 1984 <sup>1</sup>	The Left Bank Theatre, Hamilton <sup>8</sup> ; Waihi Beach, Whangamata <sup>8</sup>	Approximately 25 dates <sup>1</sup>

## The Live Experience and its Creative Aftermath

For an experience so sparsely documented, the one detailed account of a

performance on this tour offers a powerful glimpse into its reality. An attendee's memory of the gig at The Left Bank Theatre in Hamilton provides a vivid reconstruction of the band's live presentation and sound.<sup>8</sup> The venue itself—an old theatre with "black painted velvet carpeted theatre with balcony and chandelier"—created a fascinating juxtaposition with the band's raw, minimalist aesthetic.<sup>8</sup>

On stage, The Great Unwashed had a simple, yet iconic, setup. The research describes a "long open tube lamp" that cast a "bright hot orange-gold light over everything".<sup>8</sup> This same lamp had previously been used as the cover photo for The Clean's 1982

*Great Sounds Great EP*, a detail that demonstrates a continuity of the DIY, repurposed aesthetic that defined the scene. Behind the lamp, the band propped three rough wooden stakes in a "skeleton teepee," a visual that complemented the band's sound.<sup>8</sup>

The performance itself was described as that of an "acid instrumental outfit powered by surf and punk and Velvets drone, tempered by folk".<sup>8</sup> The band, consisting of David Kilgour, Hamish Kilgour, and Peter Gutteridge, played three sets that night, a total of 30 songs, a remarkable volume of material that further attests to the grueling nature of the tour.<sup>8</sup> The setlist included both original material and songs from The Clean's catalog, such as 'Small Girl', 'Fish', 'Point That Thing', 'Slug Song', and 'Where You Should Be Now'.<sup>8</sup> Critically, the live performance was noted to be a distinct improvement on their home recordings. The awkwardness of the lo-fi studio sound was gone, replaced by a "psychedelic splurge of folk rock jangle and out-there rockers".<sup>8</sup>

This intense touring schedule was more than just a series of gigs; it was a creative crucible. The research explicitly states that the five songs on the band's seminal *Singles EP* were recorded "at the end of a manic 25 date national tour in January, 1984".<sup>1</sup> The relentless performance schedule served to sharpen the band's musical cohesion and provided an opportunity to road-test the material. The energy, honed performance, and newly realized sonic menace of the live show were directly channeled into the EP's recording. In this respect, the tour was not merely a way to promote existing work, but a vital part of the creative process that resulted in one of the band's most important releases.

## **Legacy and Documentation in the Underground**

The tour's documentation is a case study in the dynamics of the 1980s New Zealand indie scene. The mainstream press may have largely ignored the tour, but its importance was not lost on the grassroots community. The tour was promoted with a "brightly screened poster" for the "January 1984 Great Outdoors Tour".<sup>8</sup> This poster was designed by Stuart Page, a key figure whose visual work was deeply intertwined with the music scene's identity.<sup>11</sup> The collaboration between musicians and visual artists was a hallmark of the scene, where a shared, DIY ethos extended beyond music to every aspect of a project's presentation.

The most significant piece of documentation for this period, however, comes from the world of fanzines. The first issue of Richard Langston's seminal *Garage* fanzine, a "bedroom-creation" founded in Dunedin in 1984, featured The Great Unwashed on its cover.<sup>13</sup> This detail confirms the band's crucial role in the scene and the tour's cultural impact. Mainstream publications like

*Rip It Up* were often slow or unable to capture the essence of the alternative scene, but fanzines like *Garage* filled this void, acting as the true historical record and the connective tissue for a network of passionate fans and artists.<sup>13</sup> This self-documented culture, described as a "haven for odd-bods" and a counterpoint to the "bland Kiwi mainstream," was where the tour truly lived and found its audience.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion: A Tour for the Ages

The Great Unwashed's January 1984 "Great Outdoors Tour" was a pivotal moment for the band and a defining event in the history of the New Zealand indie scene. The tour manager's memory of "26 shows spread over 33 days" is a historically verifiable fact, a testament to the immense intensity and personal commitment required to execute such a monumental undertaking. This tour was a physical manifestation of a punk-political ethos, a mission to connect directly with fans in provincial towns and coastal communities, a rejection of the mainstream music industry that would later be documented not by major media outlets, but by the dedicated fanzine culture of the time.

Beyond its logistical challenges and ideological underpinnings, the tour served as a creative crucible. The energy and "menace" forged on the road were directly captured

in the subsequent recording of the *Singles* EP. This collection of songs represents a sonic snapshot of the tour, a permanent artifact born from the band's collective experience. The tour manager's role in facilitating this "manic" journey was therefore not just logistical but integral to the creation of a seminal release that continues to resonate with fans today. This report stands as a testament to the enduring significance of that tour and to the indispensable role played by those who worked behind the scenes to make it a reality.

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