

IN THE GROOVE

with Kenny Weir

Black Taxi is out for a smooth ride



Jokey: April Ronsisvalle, Leah Cotterell and Yasmin Shoobridge.

CHURNING out relentless pop drivel, endlessly recycling standards, caterwauling above a grunge guitar attack or joining the already swollen ranks of the singer-songwriters.

Sometimes it seems these are the limited possibilities for talented singers looking to carve a niche in the pop music world.

Which makes the debut album of Melbourne outfit Black Taxi, *Taken For A Ride*, an invigorating and exceptionally enjoyable treat.

Black Taxi has created a style of music all its own — the group's tunes are swinging, funky, jazzy, ridiculously catchy and supremely melodic.

Best of all, this solid foundation is impeccably crowned by the vocals of three fine singers, Leah Cotterell, April Ronsisvalle and Yasmin Shoobridge.

Like their equally talented accompanying musicians, the singers, although experienced performers, are little known.

It is a tribute to Melbourne's

incredible musical depth that such a complete musical entity can burst on to record seemingly from nowhere.

For that, much of the credit must go to the album's producer, David Wayman, who gathered the Black Taxi personnel together largely from students and staff at the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.

Wayman, along with Terry Bradford, also wrote the disc's music and lyrics.

Wayman is justifiably proud of the disc and its intelligent, savvy material, written, he says, with the front line of three women singers specifically in mind.

"Even the ones that are about love come at it from a different perspective," he says.

"They're adult lyrics — they're not Babyface," he says.

"I love his melodies, but I can't stand his lyrics!

"I always had the concept of three women singers in mind. I've always liked writing for women singers.

"I was rapt with the way it turned out."

One of the group's singers, Ronsisvalle, appreciated the chance to work with tunes displaying such a fresh approach after having performed "a million cover versions".

"With things like 'You left me baby' and 'I want you back', it's a matter of, yeah, I've heard it all before," she says.

"Give me something to think about — who are they talking about, why did they write it that way, what situation are they writing about? That's what interests me most.

"So being able to sing lyrics like this was refreshing, without a doubt. It was great to interpret things in my own way, because I've never recorded original music before."

With *Taken For A Ride*, it seems Black Taxi has given a boost to a whole new sound — call it "standards for the '90s".

● *Taken For A Ride* is available through Festival.