

# Side On: Cassette Mix vs. CD/Vinyl Mix of The Clean's Odditties Album

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## **Editor's Note:**

*A version of this essay was first printed in November 2015 in Cheap Thrills, a music magazine published by Ilam Press, Christchurch. It is reprinted here because Archifacts is interested in what makes material unique – and this piece explores the differences between iterations of the 'same' item held by the National Library of New Zealand. More specifically, this will be of interest to practitioners working with audiovisual material.*

The Clean, an indie rock band from Dunedin, formed in 1978 and released their first single, "Tally Ho!" on the Christchurch based record label Flying Nun Records in 1981. Since then, they have arguably become the most influential band to emerge from New Zealand. Primarily due to cost reasons, many bands on Flying Nun eschewed the traditional (and more expensive) method of recording in a professional multi-track recording studio, often preferring to record on more primitive equipment in lounges or hired halls. When some of the Flying Nun master tapes were



Cover of the 1994 CD version of Odditties. Reference: Phono CD 0972, Alexander Turnbull Library.

converted to digital during the late 1980s and early 1990s in order to be pressed onto CD, in some cases liberties were taken as a few songs were edited and/or remixed in the process. Of all of The Clean's material, this is most evident on their *Odditties* album.

Containing an assortment of powerful, definitive versions of some of their best songs ("Odditty"), acoustic demos of ultimately unrealised song ideas ("This Guy"), to fuzzy, almost avant-garde sound experiments ("In The Back"), The Cleans' first posthumous release *Odditties* (with the intentional misspelling) has always been a favourite among hard core Clean fans, for whom it was originally aimed at in the first place. As Hamish Kilgour's liner notes stated in the original release, "Made to last for those that liked us".

The album was recorded on a Revox B77 two-track tape machine between 1980 and 1982 in various locations around Dunedin, with the bulk of the recordings taking place in early 1981 at the billiard and practice rooms of Selwyn College at Otago University. Originally self-released on cassette in 1983 under the Cleano Productions moniker, it was given wider distribution when Flying Nun re-released it in the same format in 1985. It was remixed and remastered (with two bonus tracks) for CD release by Flying Nun in July 1994, and that mix was finally released by US label 540 records on double vinyl in 2012.

This writer recently listened to an original 1983 cassette copy (with hand painted labels by Hamish Kilgour, no less) and was startled to note the difference between the mixes on the cassette and the mixes on the more commonly available compact disk and vinyl copies.

Inspired by the many "mono vs stereo" comparisons of 60's albums that exist, this writer decided to listen, write down and compare the differences of the two mixes.

So, without further ado...



Sides 1 and 2 of 1983 cassette copy of *Odditties*. Reference: Author's Collection.

## SIDE ONE

**Odditty:** David Kilgour's opening chatter of "Odditty, take a million (?)", preceded by some bassy hum and the unmistakable sound of a tape recorder being switched on is complete on the cassette version, whereas the digital version cuts in midway through the word "odditty". Furthermore, there are several mixes of the song in existence:

The cassette version appears to be in some kind of mock stereo mix (ie. bass frequencies in one channel, treble frequencies in another) whereas the digital mix is in glorious mono. A remix included on the 2003 Clean Anthology features the two tracks presented with better separation (this is particularly noticeable on the vocals), however this mix has some tape wobble/deterioration that the other mixes don't have.

There is also around half a second of tape rumble/flutter at the end, wisely edited off the digital/vinyl version.

**Success Story:** The cassette version is almost identical to the digital/vinyl version. The only major difference is that the cassette mix has an extra half a second of guitar noodling that has been edited off the very end of the latter mix.

**Thumbs Off:** Same as above. Note, on initial pressings of 2003 The Clean Anthology CD, the Odditties version of Thumbs Off was erroneously used in place of the Boodle Boodle Boodle version. However, unlike the song Odditty, both versions appear to be the same mix.

**Getting Older:** One can hear the sound of the tape machine being switched on and a very faint announcement of "rolling..." in the background, which is missing from the digital/vinyl remaster.

**Yellow Man:** The vinyl/digital mix has an extra 40 (!) seconds at the start of the song, immediately preceding David Kilgour instructing the rest of the band to "slow it down, boys". The cassette also fades out earlier than the vinyl/digital mix and lacks the "okay, boys! Hold it, hold it there. New song..." ending.

**End of my Dream:** Pretty much the two versions are identical (see "Success Story"), but with half a second or so shaved of the end of digital/vinyl remaster.

**Platypus:** The digital/vinyl mix has a "one, two, three, four" count that

the cassette version has had shaved off. However, the cassette does have an extra second or two of guitar noodling that happens after the digital/vinyl version has faded out.

**This Guy:** The cassette mix has the sound of the tape recorder being switched on and a second or two of noodly lead guitar that is missing from the digital/vinyl remaster. There is also an extra second or so of acoustic guitar plucking that has been faded out on the cassette mix.

**David Bowie:** The digital/vinyl remaster has an earlier fadeout (around a second or two) than the cassette mix.

**Mudchucker Blues:** There are a few extra second of country style lead guitar noodlings that are missing from the digital/vinyl remaster.

## **SIDE TWO**

**At The Bottom:** No major differences appear to exist between the digital/vinyl remaster and the original cassette mix.

**Hold Onto The Rail:** Whereas the digital and vinyl versions fade out at 2:13, the cassette version has an extra eleven seconds where the song has a complete ending followed by some background chatter.

**Inside Out:** Pretty much the two versions are identical (see “Success Story), but with half a second or so shaved of end of the digital/vinyl remaster. Curiously the song title is missing from the original cassette track listing (see photo), but IS listed on the CD and vinyl releases.

**Fats Domino:** The cassette version has a “take three” introduction prior to the “one, two, three, four” count in that has been cut from the digital/vinyl version.

**Sad Eyed Lady:** Similar to Fats Domino, the cassette version has a spoken word introduction (with very heavy echo) of “Sad Eyed Lady, take two. One, two, three four...” that has been removed from the digital/vinyl version.

**Tell Me Why:** Pretty much the two versions are identical (see “Success Story), but with half a second or so shaved of the start digital/vinyl remaster.



**Band that Never Was:** Features a “one, two, three, four...” introduction that has been removed from the digital/vinyl version. This song also has a slightly different position in the track order on the cassette version, where it falls between Point That Thing Dub and Safety at Home.

**Wheels Of Industry:** Listed under the title “Neat Noize” on the cassette, this is one of the primary songs where the stereo separation on the digital/vinyl mix is noticeably different to the mono mix featured on the cassette (see “Odditty”).

**Point That Thing Dub:** The cassette mix has a distant sounding and heavily echoed “one, two three, four...” count-in that has been edited from the digital/vinyl mix.

**Safety At Home:** Although sounding the same in terms of length, the digital/vinyl version has been the most heavily re-mastered compared to the original cassette master, which is very bass heavy. The cassette liner notes state that this was recorded live at the Gladstone Hotel in Christchurch, which is missing from the CD and vinyl packaging.

**Endnote**

1. As the two bonus tracks on the CD and vinyl editions (“Lemmings” and “Stylaphon Music”) are unavailable elsewhere, no comparisons could be made of these two songs.