

# ECCENTRIC

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# THE CLASH

A lot of preparation had gone into the visual side of the Clash tour. There was an abundance of slides representing aspects of most of the songs. Most striking were those hinged around dramatic events covered by the media: Violence caused by a failure of understanding of different political views, how casually physical strength is used by those who possess it.

The Clash musically were unstable. The reinstated drummer, Terry Chimes, had to be coached along. Time for rehearsing the set was something the Clash had not had. This made the older songs more suitable for show. I remarked to Joe Strummer, after the set, that they could easily be in the middle of the London Calling Tour.

JS: Yeah, that's because we've just been learning the basics with Terry. We started with 35 numbers we can play with Terry. We played 24 tonight.

ESN: Will the set remain the same throughout the tour?

JS: No, we've got ten numbers to play with. We try to learn new ones, two a day. The car broke down today, so the soundcheck was fucked. We were going to play "Car Jamming" and "Ghetto Defendant" but it was such a crap show tonight we didn't feel like it.

ESN: Newcastle City Hall has always been a bad place to play.

ESN: People can't dance here, there's too many bouncers that keep them in their seats.

JS: Yeah, we think we're going down crap. That puts us off.

ESN: What's involved in Club Casbah?

JS: We want to try and make the gig more fun for the audience. Like, it didn't go down well tonight. We had the Burundi drummers playing a couple of nights ago. We have Mikey Dread playing records. We try to come on early and leave some time at the end for Kosmo to play records and for people to dance at the unseated venues. At the end of the show a couple of nights ago, I made the announcement that we were going to

JS: We've been trying to learn with Terry stuff we've never played live before, like "Death Or Glory", but we shouldn't be playing here. It's seats. We were banned from here for two years. I wish they'd kept the ban up. We're only playing here because there's a demand.



get changed and then come out. Everybody thought we were coming back on stage. They all stood round it watching the roadies take the equipment down. What I meant was that we were going to come into the audience and have a drink. The next night at Stoke we thought, 'right, we won't make an announcement and see what happens'. So after we had done the set Kosmo started playing some great records - and they all went home! We're still trying to work out how to do it. Gigs are so shit these days we're just trying to make it more of an evening out, a bit more fun.

As we talk to Joe he is signing autographs. Everybody who waited to come backstage is there. Joe had been signing for nearly an hour.

JS: See that flicker. I'll tell you what gets on top of me. These guys mean well, but the whole lock stock and barrel, having to sign all of that. Then your hand starts shaking.

ESN: It's to bring some kind of personal contact into it.

JS: Yeah, I suppose so.

AUTOGRAPHE HUNTER: Will you sign it to Pete?

ESN: Thanks for your time.

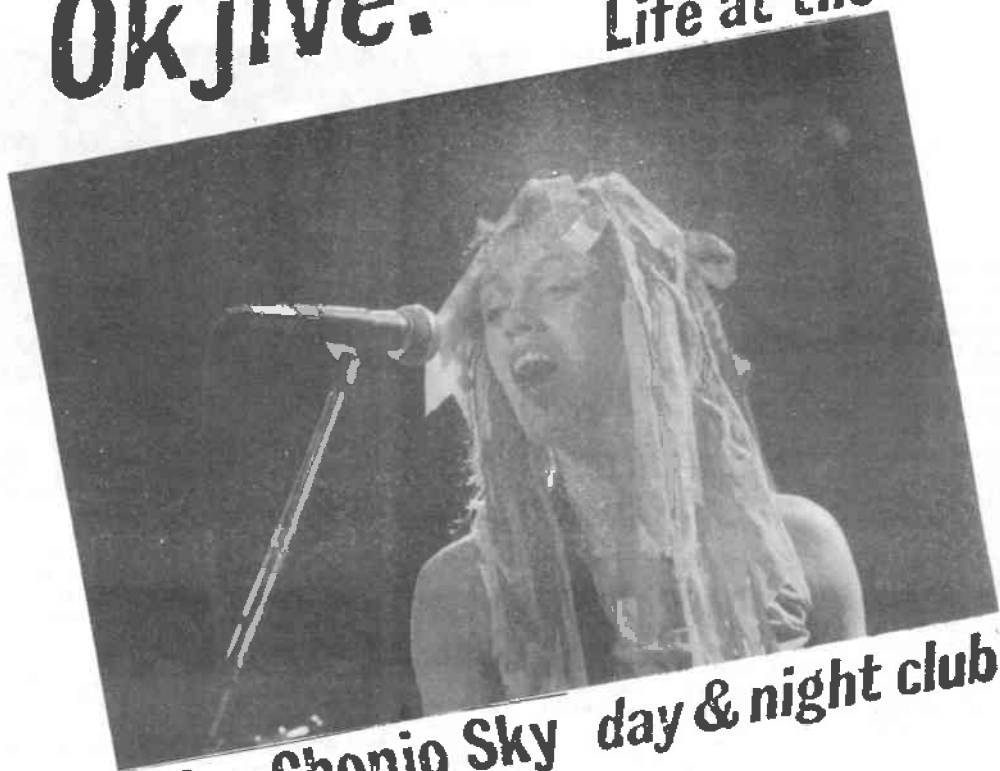
JS: You forgot something.

ESN: What's that?

JS: You didn't give me a copy of your mag. Something to read in bed!

# Ok Jive.

# Life at the



## Blue Chonjo Sky day & night club

OK Jive start promoting their career in Newcastle storming all the record shops in town, leaving a trail of posters, stickers and free records wherever they went. Hopefully "Life At The Blue Conjo Sky Day And Night Club" continued, even when they were out of ear-range of the shop turntables, this being the title of their debut L.P. on Frenzy Records. Lee: "Frenzy is our own label within CBS. We set out to sign to an independant label. This was the next best thing. We hope to have releases by other bands on the label, maybe some African bands."

Swahili music has influenced OK Jive's records greatly. Bonni: "Swahili is not only a language but also a culture." Lee: Datsun, Bavon and Bonni are all from Africa. I remember we got slagged off in a music paper written for black people in this country. It slagged us because our music is African-style, although there is only one black in the band. The article was a load of rascialist crap."

It seemed strange that Joe Jackson should have once produced a band playing African music. "We had played quite a few dates with Joe and he had really liked us. He wanted to produce our first single which was 'On Route'. It was a little strange. It didn't work out that well. Nobody was particularly pleased with the end sound. Joe inspired a great confidence in us though. He told us we had a really original sound, and what an asset that was and that we should build on it and not slip into other people's slots."

"Bavon does our producing now as well as playing guitar. It's much easier to do that than bring a producer in from the outside who is not familiar with our sound, and what we want. Producers like Martin Rushent might make hit records, but it's only because they stamp so much of themselves across the recording. A producer like that takes a band as elements and re-arranges them in his mode. At the end of the year he can turn round and say 'Well, I've produced so many hit singles this year', and that's what he gets paid for. That is not the kind of person we want."

A company can do a lot to make you successful. They should not have this power. Bonni: "When a musician becomes a businessman he's no longer a musician. When a businessman becomes a musician he's no longer a businessman. You can't be both." Datsun: "CBS are hoping we'll take off soon. They released a single, 'Anyway', just before the album without us even knowing it. They didn't promote it or anything. It was a complete waste of time. They did it on the off-chance that it might get picked up and become a hit."

OK Jive have recently finished supporting Squeeze on their "Last Orders Tour". "It's always hard to get onto a stage and play to another band's audience. We were really excited about the tour. The kind of people attracted to Squeeze are an older laid back audience more appreciative of music than fashion. Which is good because they tend to be more open minded. It's great if the audience get up and dance, we really enjoy ourselves. It didn't happen much on that tour. At the seated venues we would go on and start playing and we can see the people being ushered into their seats. It made me feel like a 2-D film. It was really claustrophobic. It was as if we were not there. At one venue everyone got up to dance. When Squeeze came on it was half an hour before they would stand up. It was really strange. People don't usually show their appreciation so enthusiastically. Quite often it's a case of 'I've come to enjoy Squeeze'. Maybe it just doesn't occur to some people to stand up for anyone other than the main band. Inbetween songs the applause can really explode. It's so worrying when you're playing the songs, you think 'What the Hell are we doing wrong?' We played with the Polecats once. The audience just glared. After that there was a rockabilly who kept turning up at our gigs to see

us. He still had the suit and the quiff. It was nice to know we had won a fan. Part of the incentive on the Squeeze tour was that we had the chance to win over people who would not otherwise hear us. That is an advantage of playing to another band's audience, it is something positive."

Progress commercially is a slow process whilst working up from singles to an album. Datsun is not happy with the band's commercial progress: "Musically we have improved and have the sound we want. The set has progressed, a lot of the older songs have been dropped." Ruby: "A lot of our songs are in two parts. The second part might be completely different to the first part though."

OK Jive play on stage with great charisma. Everything is colourful, chirpy, but not sickly. Crisp rhythms mix with Ruby's stable voice. Datsun circulates, while the rhythm continues. The guitars sound like guitars, no screech, and Bonni can sing in Swahili.

The night is not yet over, promoting never ends. After cooling down we steer Ruby and Datsun, Bansel and Cretal style, towards Metro Radio. Four miles south, the turntable assault begins. After the maze of flying one-way arrows the security guard is easily dealt with by a fast tongue. After winding him up we point him in the direction of the broadcasting studio, "Take It Easy" in hand. We discuss how plausible it would be to remove his hi-fi, with the glittering lights. Our little watchdog soon resumes his post in reception. We stand and listen as the DJ realises he has something unexpected to talk about on air. No fuss or time wasting, "Take It Easy" is slotted in nicely, before the 9 p.m. news. I walk away baffled - just who are "THE OK Jive"?

SIMON MCKAY

## ROMAN HOLLIDAY

STEVE LAMBERT - LEAD VOCALS  
 ROB LAMBERT - S-X  
 JOHN FACOTT - TRUMPET  
 STION COHEN - DRUMS  
 BRIAN BONHOUSE - GUITAR/VOCALS  
 JOHN DUFFO - BASS/VOCALS

"We've been going seven months as a swing band. We started at a residency in Gossips, London. We got more live work from there and got some labels interested" - Steve.

Roman Holliday's debut EP was released a couple of months ago, and included "Stand By" and "Motor Mania". (My personal favourites, Ha!) "We played with the Clash at Portsmouth as our first main support. We've played with Culture Club and Mari Wilson as well. We went down with her crowd quite well. The only problem is when no-one watches because the bar

is upstairs." Roman Holliday also supported the Belle Stars tour. "We were touring in a trenet and using lots of their gear." - Steve

The name Roman Holliday came from a member of the band who "was left" a year ago. "He probably thought it sounded hip at the time. The double 'l' came from a name, i.e. Billie Holliday. There was a film made in black and white years ago called 'Roman Holiday' as well." - Steve.

Roman Holliday play what was pop music in the forties. "We're not part of a revival or anything." - Steve. Indeed, one of the appealing points about the band is that they do not try to emulate forties dress, nor do they use a double bass. A very enjoyable band to watch, who play a 45 minute set of well arranged numbers. The set also includes a couple of covers. It is refreshing to see them playing in scruffy jeans. The emphasis is obviously on the music and not any would-be trend.

SIMON MCKAY

# CHINA CRISIS

Slowly but surely, bands from Liverpool are starting to be recognised by major record companies. One such band is China Crisis who recently signed to Virgin. We met the band on the third date of a British tour supporting Simple Minds. Although reluctant to respond to our questions, we managed to get a few facts out of them.

ESN: How many people are there in the band?

CC: There are two members in the band at the moment, although a few weeks ago there were three.



ESN: Why are there only two now?

CC: The third member left because he didn't like touring. That's why we didn't tour much.

ESN: So how do you manage to produce music live with only two members?

CC: On stage we have three people to help us out. We used to use tapes but now the sound is totally live.

ESN: You've just released an LP.

CC: Yes, it was recorded with the original three members and various other people helping out.

ESN: Why was African and White re-released?

CC: There was a big demand for the original single so we deleted it, held back until the orders built up and re-released it in the hope of getting it high in the charts, but it only reached somewhere in the forties.

ESN: How is the remix different from the original?

CC: The vocals were changed and it had a different B side.

ESN: What are you going to do after this tour?

CC: We are going into the studio to record a few more tracks.

At this point everyone dries up and we don't seem to be able to get anything more but skit out of China Crisis.

STEPHEN JOYCE

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# BLUEBELLS

ROBERT HODGENS - GUITAR, VOCALS  
 KEVIN McCLUSKY - HARMONICA, VOCALS  
 RUSSELL LOVINE - GUITAR, VOCALS  
 LAURENCE DOWNSON - BASS, VOCALS  
 DAVID McCLUSKY - DRUMS, VOCALS

The Bluebells were just about to release their first single, "Forever More" when ESN interviewed them for the second time. The Bluebells have played Newcastle four times in less than a year, once on their own, twice with Haircut 100 and tonight as guests on the Elvis Costello tour. The Bluebells had been in the Studio with Elvis Costello producing them, to record tracks for a possible single. Why didn't any of these tracks appear as the first single?

LAURENCE: We did the tracks with Elvis when we didn't have a record company. We had originally planned to record two and bring them out as a single on Elvis' own label, Demon. We didn't have anyone to produce us so we asked our publishers if we could have Elvis. They sent Elvis a tape of our music and he came to see us live. He liked us and agreed to produce us. We did the two tracks, "Ain In Life" and "Everybody's Somebody's Fool", but we didn't think they were very good. "Ain In Life" came off the best, but "Everybody's Somebody's Fool" was really awful, and we had planned to make it the A side. "Ain In Life" will be on the B side of the new single and a new version of "Everybody's Somebody's Fool" will appear as an extra track on the 12" single.

ESN: What was it like, working in the studio with Elvis?

LAURENCE: We liked working with Elvis, so we have got him to produce our debut album which we are going to record after this tour.

ESN: Do you think that you weren't ready to record a single when you went into the studio?

LAURENCE: We probably weren't ready to do it and didn't get around to talking about what we were going to do before we went into the studio.

ESN: You got a lot of publicity from the sessions you did for Kid Jensen?

LAURENCE: Things like radio 1 sessions are up to nothing because you go into the studio and you've got 12 hours to do four tracks and it

took us six days to record the single.

ESN: The last time we talked, you didn't have a record contract and you were looking for a good one. What is the contract like?

LAURENCE: We've signed to London which is through Phonogram. They usually just give single deals to new bands. That's what they did for the likes of ABC and Soft Cell. We were the first to be offered an album deal for 2 or 3 years.

ESN: You've had a lot of exposure with other bands, like Haircut 100, Altered Images etc.

LAURENCE: The second Haircut tour was very good, young audiences who think you are superstars as soon as you walk on stage.

ESN: If you play out of tune, they'll never know.

LAURENCE: And we did! It was good, ver good exposure. We keep getting loads of letters from them. If they write them, they are sure to buy a copy of the single.

ESN: How is this tour going?

LAURENCE: We are nearly half way through at the moment and it's going reasonably well. We've had a few good reactions. The audience are a lot older than the Haircut tour so you don't have lots of girls screaming at you when the drummer breaks his hi-hat.

At this point the interview was brought to a halt due to a soundcheck. They have their own original sound which is why they had almost every big record company after them.

STEPHEN JOYCE



# KISSING THE PINK



Kissing The Pink must be the only band who fall over one another on stage in their mad game of musical instruments. Each song finds the six members playing different instruments. Different figures even pop up behind the various microphones. At the end of the night it is very hard to pinpoint who broke what - isn't that the main disadvantage of a commune? Pete definitely broke the cymbal though.

Despite first night nerves, a little sense was wrung out of Kissing The Pink:

Two years ago, at music college in Glasgow, George, John and Pete decided to go to London to fabricate a pop band. To quote John, "To partake in rock music". As of present, Kissing The Pink have released three singles, the first on an independent label, of which very few copies were available. After the relative success of that single, there were three companies interested in the band. Kissing The Pink signed with Magnet Records, home of the Darts. John: "CBS were interested in signing us. The interested A&R bloke who signed Dire Straits to the label, was put

off us because we don't have a style in which all of our songs are moulded."

GEORGE: It's very exciting for a little band like us to be on tour.

JOHN: Our record company have put plenty of money up for this tour. We can afford to stay in hotels and eat and things, which is so good. We're very poor. They don't give us money in reality, for food in our basement flat.

GEORGE: They lent us money, just to buy equipment. There's nothing for wages. It's quite open that we're all on the dole.

JOHN: Peter Powell keeps playing our records. He kept playing Mr. Blunt, when everybody else had stopped. John Peel loves us as well. He really likes us. He played Mr. Blunt every night for years.

PETE: John Peel actually ate seven copies of Mr. Blunt.

JOHN: He said we were going to be the next Joy Division.

GEORGE: Oh John, shut up.

NICK: We try to avoid having a focal point in the band.

GEORGE: (staring through his black-lined eyes): Every band has some guy who has eyeliner on!

JOHN: Flaunting his ego. We try to get over ego so hopefully people will listen to the music, instead of concentrating on somebody's

groin. It's really difficult to get people to listen to music, so many people are into image. I find that depressing.

NICK: The interesting thing about our music is the style of our songs are so different to one another. A lot of bands plump for a certain sound. We can play the instruments reasonably well.

JOHN: We make up a song and then decide on the style. It can vary from a sort of Kraftwerk sound to funky jazz, even military.

GEORGE: Everything hinges on the meaning of the songs, the atmosphere, which is what we try to get across.

ESN: What are the songs about?

GEORGE: We have one love song.



JOHN: It's not really a love song.

GEORGE: It's called "Broken Bodies". It's about a love affair between a cripple and a "normal" person.

NICK: There's "Last Film" which is about a soldier who has to fly in a plane in the war. He is shown propaganda films of how wonderful life back in Britain is, although it's not true. They lie to him to give him an incentive to fight.

Hopefully Kissing The Pink are on the verge of some kind of a breakthrough. The Newcastle date of the tour was very badly attended, though the audience, small as it was, was extremely enthusiastic. Have you ever seen a punter physically stop the band leaving the stage until they've done a second encore?

Kissing The Pink's debut album "Naked" is to be released in February, and a promotional tour is lined up for January. BE THERE.

SIMON McKAY



What if you went to another venue for the lets bar and you were absorbed in something so radical you didn't know how to react, and left in total bewilderment?

Turn on the radio - is it hard to define what you hear? The market is saturated with new record releases, not because the music is inspired but because people want to buy records, although not as many people as in the past. People are losing interest in something uninteresting.

The Fashionable Impure are a new art form, combining music with visuals; overpowering visuals which show initiative, not merely a tray of slides added as an afterthought. The first ever true three dimensional form is being prepared for showcase performances in London. Invitations will be sent out to the music industry, offering them the chance to see something totally unique. When financial backing results from these initial performances, The Fashionable Impure will play around the country.

At a time when a thousand bands walk hand in hand up the ladder of progress merely reflecting one another, revolutionary plans and an actual set exist. I have seen them! Hush, hush, this is a preview not a throw-away description.

The Fashionable Impure are ready to make a video for demonstration. It will be shot at one angle and one distance, head on, throughout the two or three tracks, so strong is the subject. Video is not part of the new art-form, merely a transmitter paving the way to the showcase performances - then the media and industry jump in. But then, Mr. Money-maker always makes exceedingly good investments. I'll snugly say "I told you so".

SIMON McKAY



# DAINTEES

The Daintees, familiar with busking, plugged in guitars and microphones for their audition in Newcastle's BEV one weekday afternoon. Their performance, even without drums, secured them a place on Kitchenware Records. The label released "Involved With Love"/"Roll On Summertime" last August. Martin: Red Rhino made a really bad job of distributing the single. It was unobtainable. I was talking to someone at the Venue, who said London pirate stations were playing the record continually. John Peel played it. Kid Jensen's producer said we're more of a Radio 2 band. He wouldn't play it. I think Radio 2 has a lot more class than Radio 1. The music is by musicians and songwriters. We're hoping to do a session for Terry Wogan."

The Daintees toured with Aztec Camera, playing London, Newcastle, Sunderland and tour dates in Scotland; Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow and Aberdeen. Martin: "Aberdeen was a really good gig, we did an encore there. We could have done one at some of the other dates but the Aztec Camera manager wouldn't let us run over time. In comparison the Venue was really dead, no atmosphere. It's hard to really put yourself into it when you've got no feedback. As soon as Aztec Camera came on, whoosh, straight to the front. We did win them over at the end a bit." Chris: "We didn't make a profit on the tour. In Scotland Aztec gave us some of their money. It was worth playing for the publicity though. It was a nice working holiday. We didn't expect to make money. Aztec Camera were really nice to us." Martin: "At Edinburgh somebody sabotaged the P.A. settings between us soundchecking and playing our set. Two of Aztec Camera were



running round trying to sort it out as we played. They had a better sound on all of the dates. That's expected when we only have ten minutes to soundcheck. We didn't take too much notice of the sound quality when we were playing. You can become too involved in the playing to notice.

The band actually consist of Martin - Guitar, Vocals; Jamie - Guitar, Backing Vocals; Chris - Bass; Adam - Drums. Martin: "We son't want to be a novelty band. We just want people to take our music seriously. That is what matters. I want the Daintees to record excellent songs which will still be in people's minds in ten years time."

Martin: "When you meet somebody who's in

a band you expect them to be exciting and something special. They're not." Chris: "Yeah, Martin's really boring." Martin: "As a band we're all on the same wavelength. We came together by chance, but share similar interests and don't have musical conflicts. If one of us left the Daintees would probably fold."

The Daintees have recently returned from recording in London. Four tracks were recorded at Phonogram's expense. Negotiations for Phonogram to distribute the next Daintees single next January, still on Kitchenware, are taking place. The A side was written in the studio and is called "Turn Me Around".

SIMON MCKAY

# ECHO AND THE

The Liverpool Scene. Has Been. Will Be. Look Right. Club Left. Place it. Texteth? Warehouse? Ministry? Private Hell. Put your finger on anything good from the North-West. Where? It's all opinion. A minion? Could be. Use an enema and all things scouse would drown in the crap seeping out of the ruins any atlas would call a city. Affinity. Scant regard. Forgotten by the government. Admired by NME, and all things musical. The Soul Kitchen wouldn't go bankrupt in Liverpool. Liverpool might.

And out of the desolation came forth new hope. All those lists you've read before. Teardrop, Bunnymen etc. Look right. Whisper working class. Cue image. Shaz? Some are. Am I.

-oOo-

Face: Les Pattinson Job: Bass with Bunnymen Age: 24 Interview:-

LP: I left school at 16. Then I worked, boatbuilding, for five years to the day. Then I decided that while I was still young, I'd give the band a go.

ESN: Were you in any bands at school?

LP: No, this is the first one.

ESN: Before that?

LP: I used to go to Eric's a lot. I thought it was fantastic. The first bands I saw were Generation X, The Damned, The Clash. I used to go three times a week, spend all my wages on seeing bands.

ESN: Did you enjoy boatbuilding?

LP: They were the best five years of my life.

ESN: Better than now?

LP: Physically different. It was great to get home at night and know you'd done a days work. Now, I sleep til about eleven, rehearse etc. It's hard, different.

ESN: Where do you live?

LP: I still live with my parents, 'cos it's cheap.

ESN: What is their reaction to your life-style?



LP: Well, it's something for me dad to say when he's in the pub. Me mum was there last night, it was the first time they'd seen us. It kinda like puts you off, thinking, God, me mum's out there, which I thought when we did the first number. She loved it and so did me dad.

ESN: What was their reaction when you quit boatbuilding?

LP: They told me to stick to my job, saying I was mad. Now when I say that I'm going to quit the band and get a normal job, they tell me to stay with the band. I just do the opposite of what they say!

ESN: How long have you been playing the bass?

LP: About three and a half years. I started three days before our first gig, I'd never touched a guitar before. It was a support with The Teardrop Explodes at Eric's. Me and Pete (De Freitas) were really nervous. I've never been so nervous in my life.

ESN: What was it like?

LP: It was great. Heart wrenching. Everyone regarded it as a classic. We only did one song, "Monkeys", but it was fifteen minutes long.

# THE BUNNYMEN

ESN: What do you do when you go down to London?

LP: We go out and get drunk - it's the only enjoyment there is. We used to be against that rockist image but there's no point in taking that attitude.

ESN: Have your musical tastes changed recently?

LP: Oh definitely, yes. After being in the studio especially. One or two L.P.s from years ago I still like - early Bowie up to Space Oddity, Images, etc.

ESN: Would you let images put you off?

LP: Sometimes it does. Take Dexy's Midnight Runners. They deny it about fashion and then they ram it down your throat. To me, they're really big hypocrites 'cos they were in a cabaret band in velvet suits when I first saw them.

ESN: Musically?

LP: I liked Geno. Eileen is really catchy and very well done... They said "we don't do interviews, we don't like hippies, smoking pot, they're the degenerates of today" and then they say "we believe in doing what you want to, keep the spirit" - it's stupid.

ESN: The Rock Press?

LP: Don't like 'em!

ESN: Even though they've helped you a lot?

LP: It's only because we're four nice chaps. When they come up, it's just because we have a good laugh. Live, sometimes we're great, sometimes we're really shit. When the moments are magic, they're really ace, we savour them.

ESN: What about the new violinist (who played with them live)

LP: His name is Sharkar. We're just using him for the album. We met up with him at WOMAD and it just went from there.

ESN: Were you surprised at the success of Back Of Love, compared to A Promise?

LP: I never thought Promise would make it. It was one of those weird songs, everyone could listen to it, but it didn't get any airplay. Love playing The Back Of Love. It's difficult to play, so it's good when you get it right.

ESN: Why are you re-mixing the album?

LP: We didn't zero it, and one or two of the tracks might be better, so... We've seen already that it is better.

ESN: What's it called?

LP: Dunno yet. That usually happens is Mac has a great idea and it goes round until we settle.

ESN: The direction of this album is now settled. So where next?

LP: I dunno. It's personal really. The other two albums have stood the test of time. It's just us. All four of us know what we want, it's just doing the right thing. The relationship within the band isn't what it

used to be as me, Mac and Will used to go out every night and get pissed and generally have a good time. Now Mac is almost married, Will can be moody.

ESN: And you've not changed?

LP: No.

DAVID MARTIN



# GANG OF FOUR



Jon King was quick to pick up on the introduction I laid before him: a cutting from a German TV Times. It showed a still from *Winnnetou 1*, the much famed Cowboy and Indian handshake, amidst rocks and blue sky.

JON: This is one of the biggest TV series in Europe. We went to Yugoslavia, and I was told the whole background to it. I saw it like this except it was in black 'n' white, and liked the picture. This alienated Western heroes goes around befriendng Indians, and that's what the stories are built around. Which is quite co-incidental. I couldn't of course, use the picture because of copyright. So what I did was, I traced it to avoid any possibility of connection and made the faces white and red. That was part of the idea as well. We've been sued before for using pictures out of magazines. On "Tourist", the woman on the back sued us. On an Everest advert in a paper it said "It's her family". She couldn't leave her house because it was so upsetting that a punk group had used her photograph on their cover. The BBC hated it because it mentioned packets. The ad agency sued us for it as well. It cost us as much as we made on the bloody thing.

ESN: Was there any attempt to have it taken off the market?

JON: It was too late, the person didn't find out until it had sold. It was in her interest to get damages.

Prior to our interview The Gang had been filmed for a TV news show in which they wore leotards.

JON: We thought it would be a bit of a laugh. We had all sorts of different uniforms projected on us. EMI tried to convince everybody that it wasn't about the army, which obviously it was. It isn't about people who are worried about their sexuality as the *NME* review of it said. Most of it's about hand-outs - they got me down. You've got no opportunity, this is where your culture pushes you. You've got nothing else. Look at the army now, they're actually making people redundant. There's no shortage of people for cannon fodder, there are so many people who have got buggar all to do.

We had a lot of trouble with uniform because of the Falklands crisis. When it first came out it was doing really well. It went to number 65, then Radio 1 stopped playing it and it started to go down. They knew it wasn't connected with the Falklands, the radio producers were being quite reasonable about it. The line was, if the "Shoot, shoot, burrrh" was being played and there was an interruption saying another 200 men had been killed it would reflect badly on them. It was recorded two months before the Falklands conflict. It was a real pain in the arse.

In the past our stuff has always been too political or heavy. We got bored with making statements like on "Entertainment". On "Uniform" we spent a lot of time getting the vocal sound right. It depends a lot on the vocal sound as to whether the radio will play it or not. "Uniform" became so incredibly political. More so than "Poverty".

ESN: Have you added a fifth member to the band, on synthesised bongos?

JON: Simmons drums. Eddie Redah is not a full member. She's only playing with us live. We need extra percussion when we appear live, the songs need it. There's no way of doing it otherwise, and she's got a great voice. There's loads of percussion - "We Live As We Dream Alone", "Kii Kii Buah". I couldn't do that, unless I had five arms.

ESN: Do you feel as though you can achieve something and it's not just the motions of a job?

JON: On the bottom of it, it's just a job. That's how I earn my living. That is pretty straightforward. I find it really interesting, particularly having done "Songs Of The Free". I feel we're getting somewhere towards what we could have done. I think "Entertainment" bogged me down. Dave Allen wrote them, although they were credited to The Gang Of Four. Dave ran out of ideas. On "Solid Gold", Andy and I were credited on four of the songs. Now we do all the writing. We're really productive. Together we wrote 25 songs for the last album. Thirteen we recorded.

ESN: Although there were only nine songs on the album.

JON: One went on the other side of "Uniform". There was another one, which was a bit of a rocker. We play it live but it didn't really fit the LP. On that second side, I really like playing it right through as it is. The last track has me singing quietly over a synth. It's not like anything we've ever done before. On "Solid Gold", for me, there were only six really good songs. I don't like "Ditch", "Keep It", don't like "Trains". There was "Army" which is one of my absolute favourites. Although it never came out good on record, live I love it.

I suppose it is just a job, I really enjoy it, though. I've always enjoyed music that gives you an echo in your own life. I don't think you can change somebody's mind by writing a song, when people are moving in a certain way anyway. They sort of get music as a fellow traveller to themselves. They don't listen to a song and say "Great, now I'm going to renounce nuclear weapons". (We never take on grand subjects like that anyway. Not ever.) Somebody moving in that direction might say, yeah, I see the point. Got any chicken? Chicken for me. (Jon tries to order some wonderful fayfair grub. His reaction is well illustrated.)

Jon's wonderful, racing mind (he doesn't need me to prompt him), has plenty to say:

JON: We got a lot of flak for signing to EMI. When EMI work well they deliver exactly what you want. You have to use them in the right way, give them a product. Then their six weeks selling cycle follows. They do things Rough Trade can never do. I've never believed in do-it-yourself things anyway, never have done. We were with Fast, in Glasgow... In the sense of having made something it's not necessarily a good thing. This magazine of yours, it's no good writing it and not being

able to sell it. It wouldn't be worth your time. It reached the stage where a band would have a thousand copies of a record for themselves, and nobody would buy it. Rough Trade have got a large turnover, but not the organisation to back up a single that may dent the charts. EMI is funny, if you know how they work you can really use the machine. "Uniform" was stifled, so we'll put another one out straight away. EMI picked up the option on us. If we make another two albums for them we are free of our contract.

ESN: On the "Solid Gold" tour you had problems with your voice. Has that cleared up now?

JON: I never used to be able to breathe properly. My singing came too much from my throat and not enough from down below. I can now sing for a long time with a different technique - pushing up from lower down. I sing in tune and loudly for as long as a 30 day tour.

To me, The Gang Of Four are one of the few bands that have progressed, leaving a trail of good records and tours behind them. To them originality comes easily, and is omitted just as easily. How many bands can retain their fans who still feel enthusiastic, not merely loyal? How many other bands have dropped a disillusioned audience along the stage-wayside?

SIMON MCKAY



TAKE A TIP, GET HIP: ESN

# BELLE STARS

The Belle Stars were nearing the end of their first British tour when we interviewed them before a gig at Newcastle Poly.

ESN: What has the tour been like?

STELLA: It's OK, there aren't as many people coming to the gigs as we expected.

ESN: Do you think this is because you've lost popularity since the hit single?

STELLA: No, not at all. I think it's because people aren't coming to gigs anymore, because of the recession and they've got no money. It's not just us that are being hit by it either.

JENNY: Even people like Mick Jagger are being hit. He played the Hope And Anchor the other week to two people.

ESN: Was that an undercover gig?

STELLA: Yes, but you would still think that people would have got to know that the Stones were playing the Hope And Anchor.

ESN: Why do you think the last single didn't do as well as the previous two?

STELLA: Because we released it too soon after "The Clapping Song" and because it was another cover.

ESN: So you don't want to do any more covers?

STELLA: No, the next single is going to be one of our own called "Sign Of The Times". It's a real rocker, a killer.

ESN: I think that "Iko" and "The Clapping Song" were really bad, taking the first three singles into consideration.

STELLA: You can't say they were a bad sound, or badly produced. We were just trying something else because we had tried our own stuff and they hadn't worked. You can't be poor all of your life.

ESN: Why did you do cover versions?

STELLA: To get a single in the charts. It worked, people know us. We've been on TV, so now hopefully we can do our own stuff, and get more response than we did in the early days. We didn't get a hit single even though we released three singles, so we did a cover version which was the in thing. What do you think of Bauhaus doing Ziggy Stardust?

ESN: Terrible.

STELLA: Yeah! That's it, but look at how high it got in the charts. You didn't even think of them doing a cover. You would have thought they would have been against that.

ESN: They didn't even include it on the LP so they got a hit single out of it then waved it goodbye. What happened to Penny Layton?

STELLA: She left. She found it cold when we were touring, in the cold van.

ESN: I thought all these cover versions would have kept her warm.

STELLA: I suppose there were other problems as well. She works at the screen on the green selling chocolate now. Around that time Jenny's brain went.

JENNY: What's that?

STELLA: Your brain love, it left us when Penny left.

JENNY: Oh, my brain went.

STELLA: Just a joke. Claire's joined us now.

JENNY: Well, round of applause.

ESN: When does the LP come out?

STELLA: January 28th.

ESN: Is this the LP you promised me a year ago would be out Feb/March 1982?

JENNY: Yeah!

STELLA: The album's got a lot of our own songs on it, some covers, and it sounds alright. Doesn't it?

ESN: And it took you a year to make it.

STELLA: No, it took a couple of months. It took us a year to get into the studio.

ESN: Claire, why did you join the band?

STELLA: We offered her lots of money and men every night.

ESN: How are stiff records treating you?

STELLA: Not too bad.

ESN: We don't really know, we haven't been with any other record company.

# FASHION

ESN: What happened to De Harriss?

MARTIN: It was just totally out of the blue. We just got a letter from the record co., saying that he'd left the band and that we could put it down to different ideas. On the next album he wanted to use things like a brass section and backing vocalists, which we thought tough! We were going to come out sounding like Kool And The Gang, and it's not really where we're coming from. So we decided to do some demos between us. De did some demos in London and took them to the record co. and they thought they were a load of shit, and we did some in Birmingham and they thought "this is more like Fashion sound like", and that blew his confidence. From then on we just started growing apart. You know, we could see the enthusiasm was going, and then he sent a letter to the record co. saying he'd left the band. He didn't give any reasons, just "I've left the band". I haven't even seen the letter.

ESN: Who's going to write the new material?

MARTIN: We're going to write it between us. The only reason De wrote the last material was because he wouldn't let anyone else write 'cos he wanted all the publishing. That's the sort of guy he was, he never fitted in anyway, just sort of took over the whole thing and it was just getting out of hand. Tonight we'll be doing three new songs, 2 of which Troy had already got recorded on a cassette when he joined the band and one which Alan had already recorded. In future I'll write and Mulligan'll write and maybe I'll work with Dik and work it from a bass and drums point of view and we'll all contribute. It'll all be equal - it's much more a band, much more a five piece.

ESN: So will the music be very different?

MARTIN: It will be. I think it'll still be dance orientated, but it'll be a lot different, a lot more youth orientated as opposed to sophisticated audience which is where De was trying to get across to. We'll gradually move away from the old songs.

ESN: Troy, how did your split with Teardrop come about?

TROY: It was really complicated with Teardrop. Explodes as far as me leaving. It was partly leaving, partly being made to leave. It was a very complicated situation, it just fell apart really 'cos we did it for such a long time and we had different musical tastes and attitudes towards touring and playing to audiences and things like that. There's been such a lot said about it that it's a waste of time.



STELLA: It's good now that they've moved because they just live down the road from where most of the bands live.

ESN: Are they pushing you to release more cover versions to gain hit singles?

STELLA: No, I think they've realised that we want to do our own stuff now.

EJ: I think they had our best interests at heart when they released the covers because they wanted us to be successful. Seeing as a lot of people were releasing covers it seemed a good thing to do from a record company point of view.

ESN: Do you get total control of what is released?

STELLA: Yeah, well, at least we get a chance to have a discussion about it.

CLAIRE: We are going to America next week to do three gigs.

JENNY: New York!

STELLA: We are really looking forward to it. We're doing three gigs, two at the Danceteria and one in Philadelphia.

ESN: Have you released any records in America?

STELLA: No, they are singles which have been imported from Britain. The LP will be released over there if Stiff get a distributor.

ESN: Why are you going to America without any vinyl to promote?

STELLA: Just really as a test to see how everything goes.

CLAIRE: We are all really looking forward to it.

At this point the interview ends when all the members of the band rush out of the room to watch "Deep Roots of Music" on TV.

STEPHEN JOYCE

DIK INTERRUPTS: I see you're doing an interview. You've just joined the band. He's only been in the band 5 minutes! What about me? What about me! Oh, don't mind me! Just sod off!!

TROY: Go on without me then will you?

DIK: Yeah!

TROY: Go on, bang your tubs. ...Anyway, that's all over and I can't be bothered to talk about it.

ESN: Do you prefer Fashion audiences?

TROY: I prefer playing with Fashion. It suits me.

MARTIN: I think we attract the same sort of audiences as Teardrop.

ESN: You don't get the screaming little girls.

TROY: No, we haven't got that, but that was only happening when we had a hit record. Then the hit records stopped you didn't have much screaming in the audience then.

ESN: Did the screaming bug you?

TROY: No, it was like...

MARTIN: You got off on it!!

TROY: No, obviously if you're standing on stage and there's all these little girls you're gonna get off on it. It's not so much bugging you, it's just you see it realistically, that they want a reason to scream, and it's a very hysterical situation. And, yeah, he's right you do get off on it to some degree, but at the same time in your mind you know it's stupid so you don't really take it seriously. I was more interested in playing the music and if that enabled us to play the music, well that was good. Sometimes it was a bit frustrating, like if you knew you were going really

badly. We were playing one night and it was really bad. The sound was awful and there were all these people screaming at the front. I just turned my guitar off and just mimed playing guitar, right, just mimed adjusting the volume knobs 'cos I was in this really cynical mood. And even when I did there were still people going "Wah!" and I thought "Oh God, what's going on". But Julian was the main focal point of the band and a lot of the girls used to come because they were into Cope's image.

ESN: They're not so much into the music?

TROY: Yeah. I think a lot of the people were, it was just a mixture, but it was mainly when Reward was really big and then it kinda went down a bit and then we went abroad so it wasn't the same sort of mania anymore. Which was

good on the one hand, but bad in the sense that you get used to getting high off a few thousand people then you have to start getting high off 200 or so. You do notice the difference. But I'm not personally really bothered because I don't play music just so anybody will see me. I do it because I just have to. It's really important. I can't explain it, it's like breathing.

ESN: How big a strain is the tour?

MARTIN: This tour is a strain.

TROY: I think it's pretty heavy. It's a lot of work.

MARTIN: We've been together as a five piece for three weeks. In that time Troy's had the most work to do, learning the lyrics.

TROY: Learning to forget them, which I frequently do. It gives it that raw edge. What I've tried to do is to interpret the words around me. Try to stick fairly close to vocal delivery, but to infer in the stage act something a bit different. Like the song "White Stuff" - we were talking about it today and we're going to try to infer things about De Lorean. I don't think that's what De Harris meant, it doesn't matter, I just take it to mean that. I'm trying to interpret the songs in the way that I think I can sing and really mean it, rather than just going up and miming to a song and trying to copy it exactly, which is bullshit, you'll never do it. We are talking about things like that. We usually have about 30 seconds to discuss everything in between sleeping and driving and doing the gigs.

I was into Fashion before De Harris joined them anyway, we've got common ground between all of us. The whole attitude about certain kinds of sounds, music and certain things we want to do. We want to get a bit heavier tho', and I don't mean like Heavy Metal, it's just like...

MARTIN: Heavier!!

TROY: More relative to what's going on. Just doing our own sort of sound.

The interview was wound up when Troy limped off to soundcheck.

TROY: With me peg leg. I fell over on stage last night. Good, eh?

MARTIN: It's part of the new stage act!

The only mishap on stage tonight was Alan Darby. Move On All!

OWING TO LACK OF SPACE, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO PRINT THIS INTERVIEW IN ITS ENTIRETY. COPIES OF THE UNEDITED VERSION ARE AVAILABLE FROM SIMON SEPTEWNOTE. ENCLOSE AN S.A.E.