

BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

NUMBER 128

AUGUST 1991

SANDKINGS

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NOTES THE BAR	16th August
ROCKWELLS	16th August
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HOP N GRAPE (Aldridge)	16th August
THE INSTITUTE	17th August
THE CROWN (Sutton Coldfield)	18th August
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CAGNEYS	23rd August
COVENTRY	
BROWNS	15th August
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THERE'S NO MISTAKING...
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live



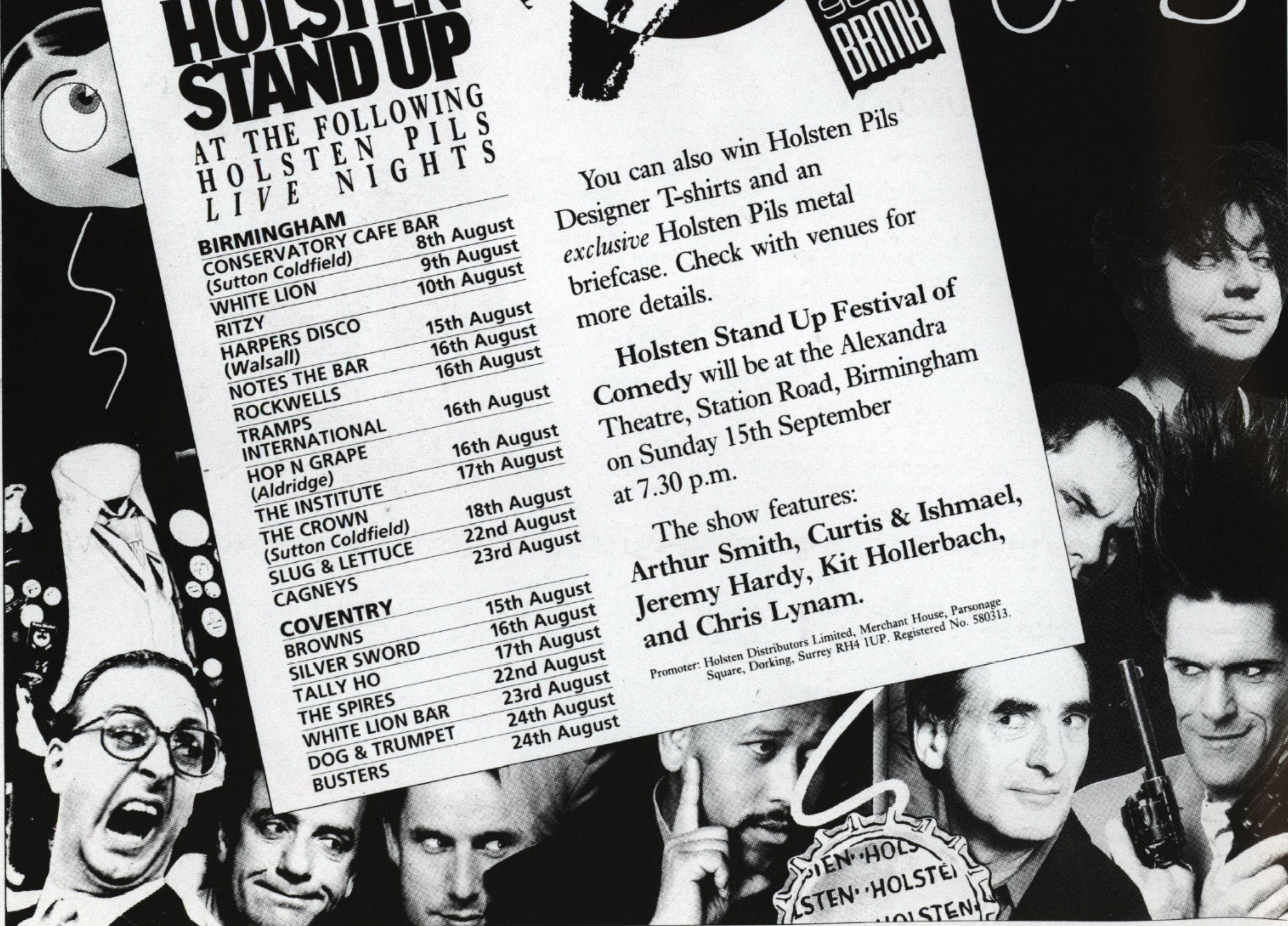
You can also win Holsten Pils Designer T-shirts and an exclusive Holsten Pils metal briefcase. Check with venues for more details.

Holsten Stand Up Festival of Comedy will be at the Alexandra Theatre, Station Road, Birmingham on Sunday 15th September at 7.30 p.m.

The show features:
Arthur Smith, Curtis & Ishmael,
Jeremy Hardy, Kit Hollerbach,
and Chris Lynam.

Promoter: Holsten Distributors Limited, Merchant House, Parsonage Square, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1UP. Registered No. 580313.

Festival of Comedy



news



Courtney Pine

STING'S JAZZERS

Silk Cut City Jazz brings a couple of Sting's favourite sidemen to Birmingham this summer albeit in separate concerts; and minus Sting of course!

Pianist/keyboard-ist Kenny Kirkland is first up on Friday August 9th when he appears with Courtney Pine, Charnett Moffett and Marvin 'Smitty' Smith. Branford Marsalis, the sax-man who made Sting's early albums so memorable for many, follows on Saturday September 7th when he appears with special guest, Marcus Roberts.

Both concerts take place at Birmingham Town Hall and tickets at 7.50 - 12.50 are now on sale.

T.REXTACY

With Marc Bolan and T. Rex due back in the charts thanks to Levis 501s adopting 'Twentieth Century Boy' for their new TV ad campaign, the remembrance party set for Saturday September 21st at Aston Villa Lei-

sure Centre looks like being the big one.

All music at the event will be Tyrannosaurus Rex, T. Rex or Marc Bolan.

Tickets for the party, which marks the fourteenth anniversary of Bolan's death on September 16th '77, are 4 from HQ Records, Piccadilly Arcade, New Street, Birmingham. (Over 18s only, please note).

THE FOUNDRY CLOSES

The Foundry, David Travis' replacement for his hugely popular Burberries nights has been closed down by the club's owners. Following the transformation of Burberries into Tramps, Travis moved the Birmingham club's entrance to the back of the building and renamed it The Foundry. It remained as popular as ever pulling in the crowds for alternative discos and indie bands. However, following an appearance at the club by Slowdive, charges of substantial damage were levelled and Travis was

told that The Foundry was finished.

According to Travis there was no damage post Slowdive, "I inspected the club myself and there was nothing damaged at all. I don't understand their attitude, it was Tramps management that asked me to run The Foundry."

Brum Beat asked Tramps' manager, Terry Curram to comment, "It's been done from a directors' level and I can't comment over the phone.", he told us. Asked specifically about the alleged 2000 worth of damage at the Slowdive gig he said, "The actual figure wasn't quite that much but yes, there was some damage to the venue." Commenting on Travis' assertion of no damage, Mr. Curram politely added, "The people who told you that are not telling the truth."

Pressed to comment on the possibility that an alternative / indie audience did not sit easily with Broad Street's new expense account image, Curram conceded that he couldn't "comment upon the owner's state of mind."

CROPREDY CAPERS '91

'Tis the season of the folkfest. The biggest of its kind in Europe in fact. Yes, it's time for Fairport Convention to draw up to 15,000 real ale and real music fans into the real Oxfordshire countryside for The Cropredy Festival.

This year's caper takes place on Friday August 16 and Saturday August 17th in Cropredy, which is near Banbury. The Richard Thompson Band headline on Friday with the Saturday being dedicated to Fairport and friends who this year include, All About Eve's Julianne Regan, Vikki Clayton, Richard Thompson, Jerry Donohue and more. Saturday's supporting cast is damn fine too; Alias Ron Kavana, Jay Turner, Steve Gibbons Band, Dan Ar Braz, Whippersnapper, Poormouth and Blinder.

Tickets are 27.00 for the

weekend or 18.00 for Saturday only. Prior to August 7th only, you can get them mail order from Woodworm Records, PO Box 37, Banbury, Oxon OX16 8YN. Quote Access / Visa number with full name and address or send a postal order; a bounced cheque at this stage would be rather bad news! And don't forget the SAE.

LONNIE REACHES THE PARTS ...

US Blues legend, Lonnie Brooks steams into the UK for a mere six gigs this month. Luckily for the West Mids one of them is at The Breedon Bar and Border Cafe in B'ham's Cotteridge/Kings Norton area. The date? Sunday August 18th.

Co-incidentally(!), Alligator Records have a brand new Brooks' album in the stores during August/September. It's called, 'Satisfaction Guaranteed'. Brooks, an amazing guitarist, influenced by Lightnin' Hopkins and Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown, is the blueser currently raising hell in Heineken's TV ads. A fact that only goes to prove what fans of the genre have

known for years; Blues reaches the parts other music can't find! Phone 021 459 6573 for further details.

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONES

Another notch in the Brum Beat gun handle, after being first tipped for success in Mike Davies's column, JENNY JONES has signed a mega deal with Go! Discs and is currently recording material for her debut. Remember, if you want record companies to read about your tapes this is where to send them.

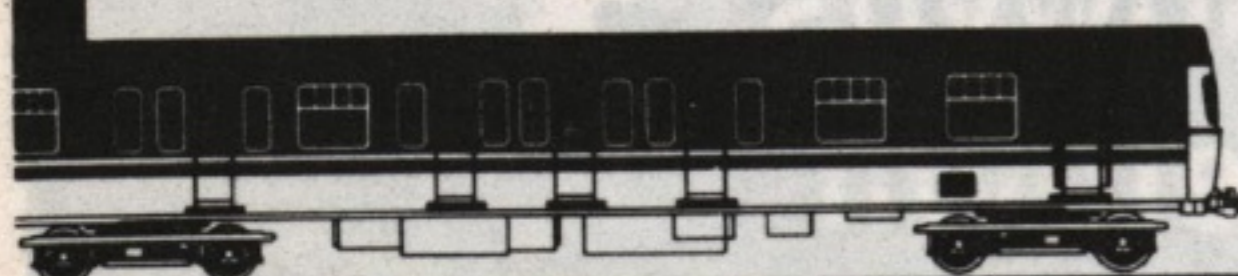
CATAPULT LET GO

Catapult Records compilation set 'Rotunda & The Monsterous Carbuncle' is finally in the shops! Featured are Catapult Club regulars (natch), The Watchmen, Liberty Thieves, Born Blind, Diablo Go, The Chemists and eight more outstanding local bands. The album slipped through our letter box just as we were going to press so look out for a full review next time.



Lonnie Brooks

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SHORTS

● **BIRTHDAY BLUES** are the order of the day for the Holly Bush at Norton Canes, Cannock this month. The venue has a thriving Thursday night R&B club that reaches its second birthday this month. Playing, in what many consider to be the ideal, intimate surroundings for the blues, this month are; FBI

(August 1), Four On The Floor (8), Izzy Skint (15), Top Bunk Blues Band (22) and Fire (29). For further information, call Chris Jeffcott on 0543 462334.

● **COVENTRY'S STOKER** has an August gig heatwave lined up even if the weather ain't sure of the season! August 7th is Bernie's Benefit Night

featuring Mudsliders, Moist and Westy. The event is to raise money for a Stoker doorman who was severely injured by a drunk driver, so get on down to the gig, OK! The rest of the month stacks up like this; Dread Lion (8), The Bogus Boys (9), Crazyhead (10), The Starlings (11), Moonshot (15), Foghorn Leghorn/The Dynamic Pets (16), The Blues Masters/The Mustang Brothers (17) Biby James (22), Sonja Kristina/Pop Am good (23), Harare Dread [from Zimbabwe] (29), Edgar Broughton (30) and The Healers (31).

● **BILLY BRAGG**, the master of 'Sexuality', brings his Dr. Ruth tribute roadshow to Birmingham's Hummingbird on Wednesday October 30th. Tickets are on sale now at 6.50. Expect a new album to coincide with the gig.

● **INDYA** have asked us to pass on their apologies to anyone who turned up to catch them at Murphy's

Bar in Brum on July 4th. It weren't their fault! Apparently the lack of a music licence was only discovered on the day of the gig!

● **TRIVIA FANS** might like to know that the backing singers who appeared with Albert Collins during the recent Birmingham

Jazz Fest were the McBroom sisters, who can claim a good blues background having toured together on the Dave Gilmour led Pink Floyd world spree. Whilst in her own right sister Durga McBroom is best known as Blue Pearl for her disco hit, 'Naked In The Rain'.

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SHORTS

● **FOLK SONGWRITERS** with an environmental message in their work should be entering the 'Natural Chords' competition being launched by the World Wide Fund For Nature, in conjunction with the Sidmouth Folk Festival. The prizes are worth 500, with the successful entrants being revealed at the 1992 Festival. Judges include Martin Carthy and Roy Bailey, the closing date is March 31 1992 and entries, on cassette, with a 3.00 registration fee and a transcript of the words, should go to, Natural Chords, World Wide Fund For Nature, PO Box 15, Banbury, Oxon, OX15 4PW. (Enquiries to the same address). Don't forget to put your name and address on both tape and transcript!

● **BANDS NEEDING A GIG**, whether it's as headliner, support or showcase, should contact Lloyd Blake at The Hummingbird on 021 236 4236.

● **WORLD MUSIC** takes the main stage at the MAC over the next few months with a treasure trove of riches that includes Langas and Manganiyars from north-western India (August 2), sitar master Deepak Choudhury (September 17), West African cora player, Boubacar Diabate (October 19), Andean music from Caliche (November 14) and Bolivia's second best known export, Rumillajta (December 11). Ticket information for Andy Kershaw types on 021 440 4923.

POP DA FREAKO'S EAR TO THE GROUND SECRETS SERVICE tells us that Redditch boys **DODGY** were auctioned to BMG Publishing for 150,000; **FACTORY CIRCUS** are being demoed by just about every record company around; **PHOENIX** are talking to EMI; **TERMINAL WORLD PARTY** have signed to Beggars Banquet; **Red Dot** are not interested in **WASTELAND** as reported in *The Evening Mail*, a Red Dot spokesman is quoted as saying, "Bullshit!"; Death Metal band **DARK SEED** are demoing for Peaceville Records; **NAPALM DEATH** are currently working with cult jazz supremo **JOHN ZORN** and finally, for now, **DROP** are closeasthis to a major deal.

● **HOME AND AWAY** (Aussie soap No 241) now has an official fan club. It costs 8 per annum to get an official badge, membership card, car sticker, postcard from the cast and more. Interested? Write to PO Box 525, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1YU. And don't miss Home And Away: The Musical when it roars into Birmingham's Alexandra Theatre from August 12-17th. Now who was it that said this mag lacks humour?!

● **JAZZI P.**, the Wolverhampton rapper recently featured on hits by L.A. Mix and Kylie Minogue, pops up on DNA's new 45, 'Rebel Woman'. It's on DNA's own label due to EMI's (the label they're signed to) reluctance to issue it as it contains a guitar riff, shall we say, borrowed, from Bowie's 'Rebel Rebel'! Jazzie also appears on Paul Hardcastle's first single in three years, 'Bust It!'. The moral? If your single needs spicing up, send for Jazzie P.



Jazzi P

● **DURAN DURAN**, having lost the services of sticksman Stirling, are currently studio-bound with replacement drummer, Roger Taylor. Whether Taylor, the megaband's original percussor, will take to the road with them when the overdubbed double de-flangeing is complete is, as they say, a mystery.

● **REDWOOD** are rockin' this month at B'Ham's Institute (August 14) and Synatra's, Birmingham (15). There's advance warning for next month too, the band are at Walsall's Wheatsheaf on September 27th.

● **YEAH JAZZ** headline a charity bash at GEC in Stafford on Friday August 2nd. The venue is to be found in St Leonards Avenue; the support acts are The Sound Organisation, Poetic Licence and The Ken Barlow Experience and all monies raised go to the local hospital scanner appeal.

● **CABBAGE HEAD KIDS**, a Bradford based nitro-pop group with Wolverhampton roots, do their homecoming thing at Smackers, Cannock (August 1); The Lion Street Centre, Telford (2) and The Falcon, Stafford (3).

● **COACH HOUSE Studio** in Lichfield has launched a special payment scheme for bands hard hit by the recession. It is aimed at giving bands on the up a chance to get material down whilst they're hot rather than suffering the frustrations of impecunity. Call Coach House for details on 0543 415558.

● **STRANGE WORLD**. Whilst the rest of us were practising rock moves with tennis rackets, John McEnroe and Pat Cash were practising tennis moves with electric guitars! The result, a love-15 defeat at the hands of Led Zep's 'Rock And Roll', proves that they play tennis with guitars as well as the rest of us rock with tennis rackets. But then again proceeds from their Music For Nations single are for the Life Aid Armenia charity whilst most of us remain charitable causes!

● **ASSASSIN** promise a killer of a set at Wednesbury's Golden Cross on Sunday August 4th.

● **THE GREAT DIVIDE** have a busy late summer planned. They're studio bound this month to lay down three tracks for 12" release. The lead cut will be 'Singular', a romp of a song destined to fill indie dance floors with dervishes. September finds the Lichfield lads in support mode whipping up audience fever for The Band Of Holy Joy, the Hollowmen and The Stunning.



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COMPETITIONS

POP WILL EAT ITSELF: UNSPOILT BY PROGRESS

★ RCA / BMG Video have released the first PWEI video, 'Unspoilt By Progress'. Filmed in PWEI Vision it's a wild, wacky, running, jumping, standing still kind of mix-up of pop(pie) promos and candid personals. See, for example, Clint & Co perform live on Guildford Railway Station!

Brum Beat has three of these fab artefacts to be won AND what's more, each winner will also receive a pristine copy of Pop Will Eat Itself's 'Cure For Sanity' LP!!!

The first three correct entries pulled out of the hat on September 1st will win their senders one video and one album each.

Q: Name two members of PWEI ... other than Clint.

MOTORHEAD: 'MELTDOWN'

★ Lemmy's Motorhead are without question the hardest rockin' of all 'eavy metal bands. The quintessential power act.

Essential Records have cast among us a three CD celebration, aptly called 'Meltdown'. This 59 tracker features nearly all of the band's singles alongside classic live cuts from the two 'No Sleep' sets and a bonus of previously unissued live tracks.

Brum Beat has three of these CD Box Sets to be won. They will go to the senders of the first three correct entries drawn on September 1st.

Q: Who was Motorhead's original guitarist?

SLAMMER: SIGNED ALBUMS

★ Slammer's latest FM-Revolver/Heavy Metal Records album, 'Nightmare Scenario' is a white hot slice of mutha-metal annihilation. Ten tracks not for the weak at heart!

Brum Beat has two fully autographed LPs to be won with four (unsigned) CDs for runners up. The first two correct entries drawn on September 1st win one signed LP each with the next four winning a CD apiece.

Q: What was the name of Slammer's debut album?

SOUL CLASSICS FROM 'OLD GOLD/REDISCOVER'

★ Old Gold's excellent Rediscover series has gone funky with its latest pair of releases. Available as double CD/MC at the bargain price of 9.99/6.99, the series specialises in collecting classic oldies and making them sound like you wouldn't believe they could! The latest, 'In The Midnight Hour' and 'How 'bout Us' exceed their best so far with Bob & Earl, Isley Bros, Booker T & The MGs, Gloria Jones, James Brown and many, many more gems on the former whilst the latter boasts Dorothy Moore, Alexander O'Neal, Sister Sledge, Stylistics, Aretha Franklin and more mellifluous magic. And that's the tip of the iceberg, the discs are crammed with genuine soul-gold greats.

Brum Beat has three prize packs each featuring one of each double CD. The first three correct entries drawn on September 1st will win one pair of CDs for each sender.

**Q: Who recorded a) Love Don't Live Here Anymore.
b) Sweet Soul Music
c) Juicy Fruit**

L.A.FREEWAY

★ Well the met office and the old man with a beard who lives upstairs may have failed to provide a summer, but Brum Beat is about to put sunshine into the ears, where it belongs! Courtesy of Dino Records ten lucky readers will have a cassette copy of 'L.A. Freeway' coming to them to make their walkmans and cars portable heatwaves. 'L.A. Freeway' is an 18 track sunburst featuring The Eagles, Doobie Brothers, Tom Petty, REM, Steve Earle, America, Allman Brothers and more.

The senders of the first ten correct entries to be drawn out of the sun-hat on September 1st win one cassette of 'L.A. Freeway' each.

Q: What was the name of America's horse?

HOW TO ENTER

★ Brum Beat competitions are free and easy to enter. Simply send your answer on a postcard stating clearly which competition it applies to (one postcard per competition please, if entering more than one several postcards can be put into one envelope to save on stamps). Please include your name and address and daytime and/or evening phone number (if possible).

Send to:- **Brum Beat Competitions, Premier House, 43-48 New Street, Birmingham B2 4LJ.**



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IS IT ROLLING, BOB?

Brum Beat checks out three prime recording facilities

Getting It Together In The Country

About sixteen miles from Wolverhampton, along a direct and very scenic route, you'll find the Shropshire market town of Bridgnorth. A town famed for great value Indian restaurants and a glut of knockout real ale pubs. There's even one on the platform of the Severn Valley Railway station if steam trains turn you on!

It was in this idyllic setting a few years ago that Oriel Melaniphy found her ideal; an impressive stone mansion large enough to accommodate her family and, more importantly, space to house a full blown recording studio in the basement.

The project ran up to full steam when engineer/producer Paul Hodson joined the team. Paul's background is one of muso, he gigged with Uriah Heep, (stop laughing at the back, someone had to!) and made his mark as a songwriter. In fact, although cagey about specifics, he admits to being able to survive financially on the proceeds of this activity which, if nothing else, is a mark of his success in the music biz.

However, Paul has a passion for music, a passion that invades every project he tackles. This is what motivates him in the studio and has made White Rabbit, for it is they of whom we speak, into the chosen studio of leading American thrash metal label Kingsway. Indeed, so impressed are they with the results that they are constantly trying to yank Paul out of Bridgnorth.

He ain't going, they have to come to him! By now you'll have noticed that there has been no mention of equipment. Well White Rabbit are not tech-junkies; "All of this," says Paul indicating the recently installed 24 track system, "is a necessary evil that puts the performance onto tape. The music is the only thing that matters."

Of course, they have everything you could ever need. They can also put you up in comfort and keep you in (free!) coffee etc etc.

Incidentally, John Parr, he of the 'St Elmo's Fire' mega-hit and Meat Loaf conspirator, chose White Rabbit for recent work and new Polydor act Slade have been resident of late!

Call Oriel on 0746 764046 if you need details of rates and availability.

Million Track Recording!

OK so it's a bit of an exaggeration but, according to Midi-Masters Recording boss Paul John Clayton, not very much of one ...

See, PJ's Heath Hayes based studio is an eight track and there are those who measure success by the size of your, er, tracks and eight, well it's not thirty two is it?

Correct, but as PJ explains, "With DAT mastering you can mix eight tracks down to two track stereo and put them back onto two, leaving six. So then it's six into two and so on ..."

Midi-Masters pride themselves on their sound quality especially at the inexpensive hourly rate and, if half of your band or more is on the dole, that rate is a mere 7 per hour!

So you may not be able to double digitise you, back-flange dog frequencies but you can create a foot-in-the-door demo of quality.

Call PJ on 0543 270243

Son Of Rich Bitch...

In addition to their 32 track digital studio, Rich Bitch Studioplex have recently opened a 24 track analogue facility, which in the first five weeks of operation has attracted Magnum, ELO, The Blessing and The Mighty Lemon Drops.

Working their way from a busy 8 track studio to a 16 track, it was Rob and Linda Bruce's decision to go 24 track that caused them to relocate to Rich Bitch's current Bristol Road home. Five or six years later Rob decided to go digital and Studio One was born, boasting not only state of the art equipment but surroundings conducive to productive recording sessions.

In late 1990 Rob was approached by Jonathan Dewsbury who, faced with the problems associated with operating a 16 track in his own house, suggested that Rich Bitch should once again set up a 24 track analogue facility. As Jonathan explains, "A lot of bands in Birmingham can't afford digital because of the higher running costs and not everybody is impressed with digital sound. Really it's best for recording masters rather than demos. The 24 track is a good cheap form of track laying, a good way of getting decent demos."

In addition to in-house engineers, electronics experts, repair shop technicians and changeover personnel are available. The studio comprises a Tascam M3500 32 channel console, Soundcraft Saturn 24 track multitrack, Sony DAT recorder for mastering, an exhaustive selection of state of the art outboard gear and Genelec, Yamaha and TOA monitoring systems. A full range of instruments is also available for hire.

The studio's initial success is hardly surprising. One hundred and twenty bands rehearse every week at Rich Bitch. The facility offers catering, poolrooms, video screens and an inviting relaxed atmosphere. Rob has also compiled a list of top session players in the area including brass and woodwind. Hopefully, orchestral players will be joining the list shortly.

Rich Bitch also have an in-house promotional and management service for promising bands; Linda Bruce is herself a respected manager, receiving about forty demos a week from bands in search of that elusive deal.

Call Rob or Linda on 021 471 1339 for details of all services.

Mark Hadley



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A QUIET WORD ABOUT
A DARK HORSE

Sour grapes from Alan Clayson
about a rival biographer of George
Harrison

We British are often accused of crying stinking fish - and this is certainly the case with most of our pop literati. There seems to be a policy of positive discrimination towards colonials. A dauntingly awful Paul McCartney biography by Chet Flippo, a journalist from Rolling Stone, lingered for lucrative months in Q's 'recommended books' list, and another native press organ made a virtue of McCartney not speaking to the bloke while rubbishing my Steve Winwood tome, 'Back In The High Life', because I'd likewise been cold-shouldered by my subject. Forgive my xenophobic paranoia but I've not read a single book concerning British pop by an American that's come anywhere near capturing the peculiarities of being British. I'm not even sure whether a non-Liverpudlian like myself is qualified to write about a Beatle but I don't waste sentences explaining what I mean by 'winkle-pickers' and 'not half'. I do not juxtapose imagined English phrases like 'all of a blessed sudden' with 'hip' Americanisms such as referring to a sex orgy as a

WHAT'S NEW IN PRINT ● EDITED BY KEVIN WILSON

'fuck-fest'. I don't think Henley is a suburb of London.

All the above examples come from Flippo, and, in fairness, 'Dark Horse' (Pan, 1991), a 'Secret Life Of George Harrison' by Geoffrey Guilliano - though another from groovy Rolling Stone - cannot be tarred with quite the same brush. Nevertheless, did John really shout 'Sieg Heil, you mothers!' at the Kaiserkeller audience? What's all this about 'after leaving Quarry Bank High School For Boys in 1953, George was enrolled at the Liverpool Institute'? Maybe 'high school' means 'primary' over there. In any case, it was Lennon not Harrison who went to Quarry bank. This was Guilliano's main gaffe but, with self-interested vigilance, I stumbled on a few other testaments to Kipling's 'what should they know of England who only England know?'

STRONGER GROUND

Old Geoff's on stronger ground when tackling George's spiritual beliefs - which, so he told me, had a profound effect on his own. He doesn't, however, delve very deeply into his man's music;

'Within You Without You', for example, isn't mentioned once, and entire albums fly by as he toes the party line that 'All Things Must Pass' is 'a gripping musical masterpiece' and 'Gone Troppo', 'disastrous' - views with which I do not concur. Tedious too is his habit of inserting dirty great quotes - one over three pages long - from Hunter Davies, 'I Me Mine', 'Chant And Be Happy' and similarly obvious sources. Yet Pete Best's dismissal is over in half a sentence, and, before you can blink, The Beatles are downing tools as a working band in San Francisco four years later. Overall, 'Dark Horse' is an untaxing read with - despite the author's access to George - nothing particularly new or significant said. The buyer must be aware, however, that I didn't want to like 'Dark Horse' because the US publication of 'The Quiet One' (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1990), my own saga of the Beatles' junior partner, is presently impeded by Geoff's hardback's head start of a year. Furthermore, George's not granting me just one little interview was galling in the light of the many he'd granted Guilliano

whose publisher was then able to sell the result by ignoring the sarcasm in Harrison's comment that the said Yank 'knows more about my life than I do'. I wonder what he thought about 'The Quiet One'? Perhaps I'd better ask Geoff.

★★★★★

SHOTS FROM THE HIP
Charles Shaar Murray (Penguin)

Last month's 'Q' carried the most informative and distinctively classy interview with Elvis Costello for some 15 years. The author was one Charles Shaar Murray. CSM is a seasoned music hack brought up in the late 60s on the underground press of 'Oz' and 'IT' and then through to 'NME', that most august of all rock weeklies. On 'NME', CSM established himself as one of the rock writers of the decade but with punk a new breed of wordsmiths emerged such as Paul Morley who wrote as he felt and never paused to consider. Punk music spawned punk writing, and that's not a criticism. CSM sat back and waited. I worked with him briefly on Record Mirror in the early 80s but he went off to become a 'Q' contributor and I came to Brum Beat (well someone had to draw the short straw, sorry Charles! Ed.) If you like thoughtful, provoking, emotional and opinionated writing, CSM is your man.

Kevin Wilson

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M I K E DAVIES

So, as I sit awaiting my **DELICIOUS MONSTER** demos and musing on the tragic fragmentation of the **GERRY COLVIN INEXPERIENCE** (scrapped recordings, live gigs vetoed, the three girls signed to A&M, huge promise wasting away. Solution - do a live album, get the critical acclaim and take it from there, it worked for Joe Ely), what tantalising aural promises have whispered in my ear this month?

VINYLISED

A belated tip of the hat to **DAN DARE'S DOG's** 'nonononoep', a four tracker of channelled musical vitriol and psychosonics that vaguely recalls the long lost PigBros and favourite Peel sessions of animal trap guitars and scalping vocals. Pin you to the wall stuff without resorting to the knuckledusters. More 'difficult' indie noise comes from **BAGMAN**, an underground hardbeat techno trio freakies with dirty guitars and wormflesh vocals all fused into a two track EP (it plays at 33 1/3), namely 'Breathless' and the kookookajooish 'Shuk 89'. Now signed to London, the **SANDKINGS** have been putting their ear to some discos given the definite dance crossover moods of 'Temple Rednecks', 'Monkey Face' and 'Plug Me In Bug Me Out' on the new single. A slight departure from earlier lighter jangles but an assured move.

To album and after founder member Brian Tatler decamped to a solo deal and the Diamond Head reunion, **RADIO MOSCOW** have recruited Tim Manford on guitar and completed their 'World Service' album. To be honest, it's not devastating but it is a good example of the strengths of British hard rock. Paul Bridgewater has the vocal attitude of an Ozzy or a Paul Rodgers, the band play with conviction and occasional soaring sparks above the sturdy reliable bassline and the material, which lies somewhere between Brit blues-rock and harder FM, maintains a steady consistency of listenability without actually setting ears alight. Tracks like 'Ring On Your Finger', 'Hear It In The Wind' and 'Red Sun/Blue Moon', provide the keys to unlock the album and with a sympathetic producer to polish up the lurking commercial potential there's no real reason (save for the lack of an exhausting gigging schedule) why they couldn't follow the same route as Thunder.

No details as to whether it's getting a UK release but **DAVE WAKELING** (you remember The Beat, General Public) resurfaces with 'No Warning' (IRS), six tracks of which I reviewed on demo form over two years ago, including the powerful 'Freedom Fighter', 'Sex With You' and 'She's Having A Baby' while of the new numbers the heated reggae of 'One+One+One' particularly stands out. The approach and voice are as distinctive as ever, harking back to the Beat ska riffs and reggae as well as favouring his current soul leanings. Unfortunately where the album falls apart is in a totally lifeless, often turgid production that drains zest and spark from the material.

With management and label now both under the Creation roof, Stephen Duffy returns with the latest **LILAC TIME** album, 'Astronauts'. Bearing a minimalist (cost-cutting?) cover a far cry from the lad's previous desires to fill the sleeve with trees and rustic landscapes (though he does have lambs bleating on one track) and despite the (joke?) Hypnotone dancer 'Dreaming', it's another excellent excursion into pastoral Robert Graves, Laurie Lee bitter sweetness country. The sound of picnics in Constable's English fields with

gentle acoustic guitars, soft bee sting vocals that Graham Nash would die for and even touches of Indian raga. A tranquil, reflective experience that blends summer breeze evening peace with slight sorrows of moments passing ('Grey Skies And Work Things'), Duffy should get together with Johnny Coppin, the result would be a stunner. Despite the intermittent pop of 'A Taste Of Honey', this is utterly uncommercial but if you fancy the sound of rustic bedsits, open spaces and tea it doesn't get better than this.

TAPE DECKED



Jenny Jones

Further to the news that **JENNY JONES** has signed to Go! Discs, she's been demoing at Rich Bitch and come up with another four stunners. Even more confident than the original deal clinching offerings, the passionate strength of her writing and performance is the sort that comes along only once every few years. Moody, sensual and haunting remain the standard adjectives to describe the music, though it's hard to find words to express the impact of a track called (I think) 'Sympatico', a magnificent declaration of womanhood without bludgeoning feminism and a spoken passage that leaves you transfixed with its simple, soul baring eloquence. Expect the first fruits early next year.

Guitar gunslingers **JAIN FAITH** are making a renewed push to get the excellent 'I'm The King' available for public consumption, to which end they've done a video that bristles with the spirit of early REM and The Wonder Stuff. There's also a new demo with '16 Ways' and 'Days Away' to prove striking songs are a habit not a flash in the pan.

AIKEN DRUM have been together just over a year and make a fairly urgent driving guitar noise with vocals that sound like Midge Ure but awake. Less frantic pacing, a wider range of musical colour and more lucidity in the material wouldn't go amiss and might add the individuality currently missing. **ONIONHEAD** have been in the studio undergoing minor CSNY surgery to judge by the harmony doo doo doo crooning on 'Keep Me In Touch'. It also seems that they were short of time

since both tracks are in a desperate hurry to get things over with and sound like they were mixed on the way out the door. That aside 'It Comes Around' is another acceptable REM outtake with a nice sunshine guitar break but one wonders whether the band haven't somewhat missed their place in rock's rich vegetable patch.

"I'll spare the bullshit", writes **ALEX VANN** on the note with 'You Can't Go/In My Dreams'. So will I. These are awful. Nothing songs, too much Bowie and not enough right notes. What's gone wrong, lad? More from **SPIRAL EYE** adds to their dirty snarling guitar funky-metal repertoire. Jagged edges, head blast solos, bad breath vocals, these are not nice boys and I wouldn't take them home to meet your mom let alone mine. But if you want to hear the sound of sweaty come-ons and lank hair and get flashed then the 4x12 Groove Tube is stopping at your station.

GIVING UP THE GHOST are Pete May and Boogie and their two tracker is working its way toward a direction, presently exploring a stripped down vague progressive-folk ambience with 'Weird Arena's layered vocals and moody gothic keyboards. However, the more direct 70s folkiness of 'In The same Boat' doesn't seem to be sailing anywhere, pleasant as it is. Staying aquatic, **DEEP WATER CONSPIRACY** splash around in the shallows of the dance groove funky rock with throaty bass and jerk rhythms on 'Never Get To Heaven' then put on poppier swimming suits for 'Let This Love In' before sloping into a sort of skiffle-shuffle wave that disastrously comes on like a cross between Typically Tropical and The Mixtures. The ideas are there, as yet the brain isn't registering them.

THE REDHOUSE SNAKES are one of those thousand bands who demo in studios that believe no tape's complete without a healthy dose of hiss spread thick across the recordings. There again from the dodgy rock-blues that appears to be buried underneath, maybe it's an improvement. When you can hear things, on acoustic tracks like 'Hero', 'An Honest man' and 'Lightnin' Girl' things are worth the effort, straddled somewhere between Bon Jovi and Springsteen. I'd like to hear it so I can hear it. **EDGING WEST** favour rock-country and probably dream about driving up dusty highways with the top down, a Bud in hand and a 45 in the glove compartment. The new demo motors from Bob Seger ('We Could Have Had It All') past Southern Blues boogie swagger with Johnny Winter traces ('Stay With Me Tonight') to a Bruce Hornsby truck stop in 'Montana'. pity about the accidental detour into Bee Gees creek on 'Hearts And Minds' though.

PAUL MAY's been a busy chap. Wearing solo hat 'Groovy Shoes' is a strong hard rock/dance crossover that lurks round the guitar shadows of the 'Frightened City' while 'Liberty' is a classical guitar coloured piece of outlaw chest swelling a la Jon B.J. He's also working with reformed 70s progrockers **JANUS** on potential tracks for their new album. From this comes the decidedly classical slumberdown floater 'Lost Cello', all moody guitar and keyboards, plus three well crafted, well orchestrated slices of soft symphonic AOR rock. Sort of Foreigner meets The Enid I guess. **SHOCK CULTURE** (who feature a Steve Morris on bass) are a new bunch from Tamworth, so why does the line "what a wicked thing to do, to make me dream of you" on 'Rescue Me' sound like i've heard it before? A reasonable, energetic enough guitar rock-pop bunch who obviously believe in economising and have written the same basic tune for all three tracks on the demo.

DEMO LISTEN

JOHN SLATER RATES THE TAPES

BOB BENNETT

Decent voice, decent programming. 'Spanish Sunset' is not brilliant though the backing track would sit very nicely behind a spaghetti western. 'Soldier Of Love' has a dated,

almost Alvin Stardust feel to it (retch), while 'Love Don't Make Sense' is the token ballad. Not special enough I'm afraid, and the beard doesn't exactly help the image.

WHIRLY BLUES

Pretty good actually, and I'm not easily pleased. 'Fish Talk' is a deliberate tease, building, changing pace and dynamics rather as Zappa was prone to do but with a more commercial edge, more 'nineties'. These guys can rock it up as in 'Down To The Ground', half spoken half sung with a terrific

instrumental break and harmonica riff though sometimes the words are a bit shitty. And they have a severe fish fetish. Promising.

CRIPTIX

O.K. When did the David Essex vocal style come back in, and are these the bastard children of Chas and Dave or has someone raided 'M's grave for that Pop Music stuff. Bob Dylan crops up a little later along with Bob Marley's ghost. A totally brave tape with some wild and wacky moments though I'm not absolutely sure

what they're meant to be. Interesting yet disturbing.

QUEST

Nicely pumping power rock with a touch of America sprinkled liberally about. The vocal's O.K. but not special enough and, in the current climate, with the glut of unsigned rock acts coming out of the woodwork, a clever guitarist is not always enough. Still, a good bolloxy demo.

John Slater is consultant to A & M Records and Hit & Run Music Ltd.

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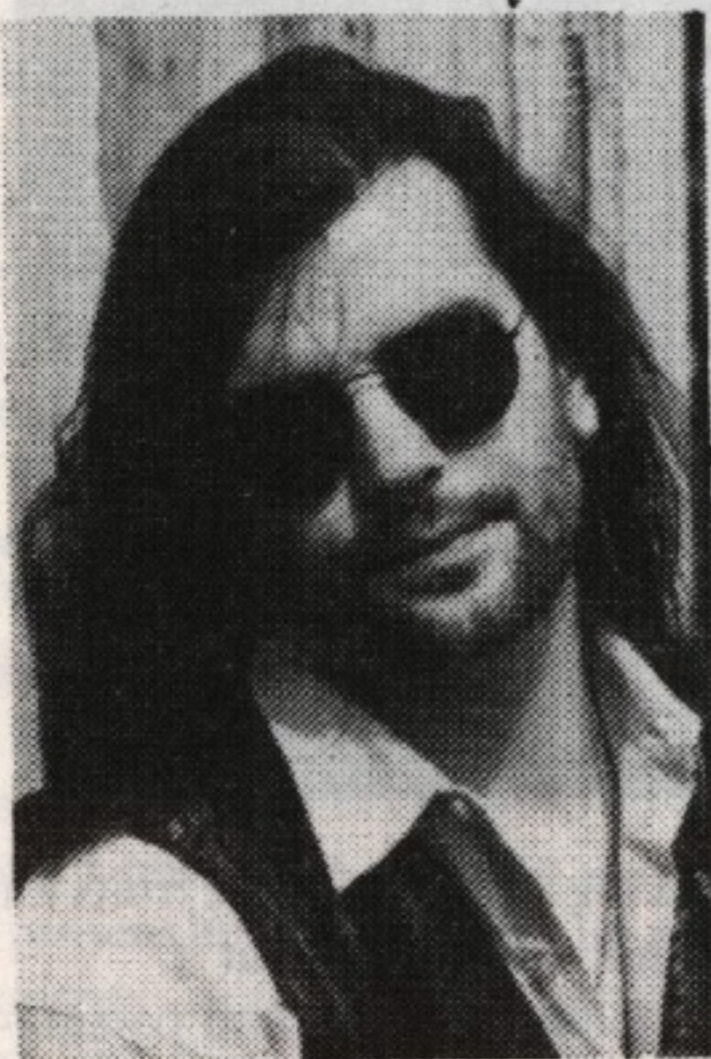
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Time to pop out into my horticultural haven once more, don that old, maggot ridden, woolly overgarment (Fashion note: A roll neck maketh the man) and turn over that old rootsy, musical compost heap. Ah, the familiar odour ...

Having pulled out of his Cambridge Folk Festival debut at the end of July, what should we have in prospect three weeks later but a Breedon Bar And Border Cafe appearance by STEVE EARLE.



Steve Earle

The date, Saturday August 17th. (Tickets at 9.50 are available from the venue, the Brum Beat offices and The Record Rack, High Street, Dudley. Due to the intimate nature of the venue, chosen by Earle himself, it is a strictly all advance ticket gig) Currently performing in solo acoustic mode, his Breedon appearance is one of only three UK dates on this visit. This son of San Antonio, Texas first settled in Nashville in 1974. Soon after hitting town Earle was an extra in Robert Altman's movie 'Nashville'. He was bass player in Guy Clark's road band by the following year, hanging around long enough to appear on Clark's classic 'Old No. 1' album. A subsequent decision to make his way as a solo act saw Earle endure a frustrating period musically through the latter part of that decade. Returning south, first to Mexico and subsequently his home town, Earle formed the first version of The Dukers in 1980.

Another spell in Nashville saw him land a publishing deal, issue a self financed EP and sign to the Epic label. That resulted in a couple of minor country chart hits but nothing to stop his free transfer from Epic to MCA in the late 80s. 'Guitar Town' appeared to universal acclaim in 1986. 'Exit 0', 'Copperhead Road' and 'The Hard Way' followed with 'Early Tracks' (a compilation of the Epic material) being released in Europe to cash in/complete the picture.

Musically more Springsteen and Cougar Mellencamp than say, Garth Brooks or Randy Travis, Earle feeds on the bloodstream of small town America. Onstage he regularly espouses his opin-

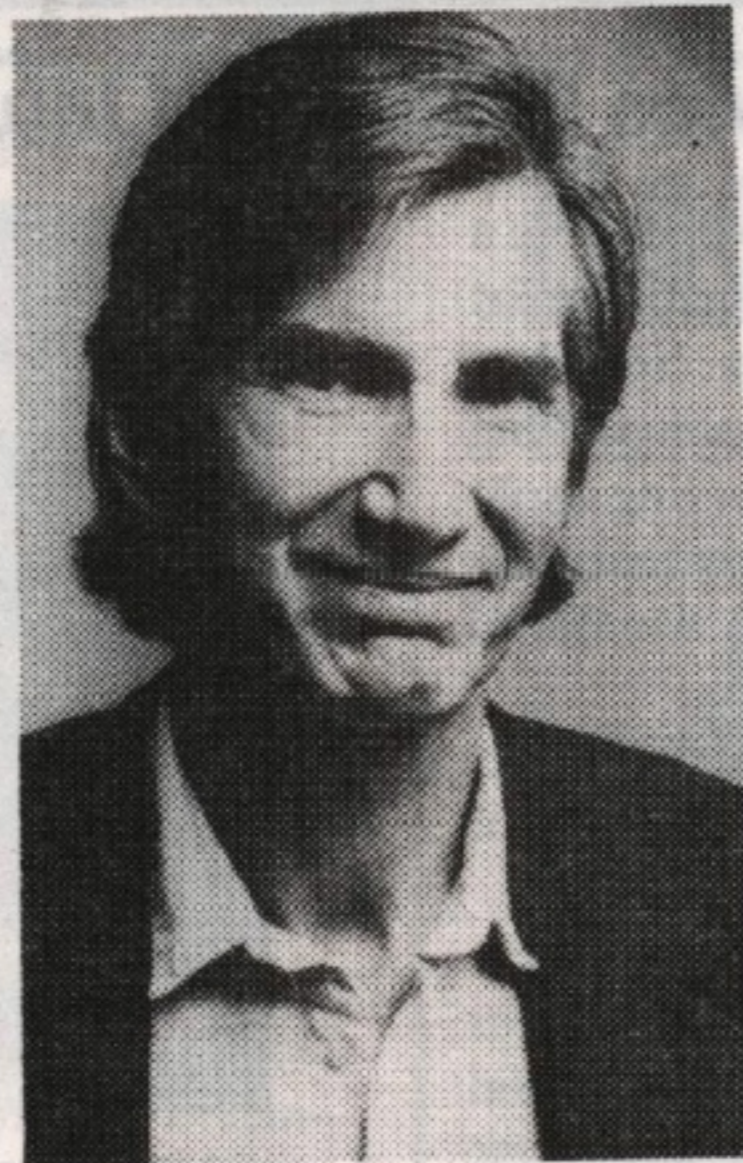
ions on numerous subjects. 'The concience of the small guy in the street who is constantly being dumped on by corporate America' probably encapsulates what he's about. This rare chance to catch him solo in a honky-tonk setting is a potential rafter shaking affair and another Brum Beat co-promotion. Attendance rating? Undoubtedly essential!

SHOWCASE

Had Steve Earle not decided to turn Brum into (Acoustic) Guitar Town, this might have been gig of the month ...

Around a year ago this particular showcase was probably destined to be the tip of the Himley Hall (Folk) Music Festival. Sadly promotion of that event fell by the wayside in the time between. Economic factors, no doubt! But I digress. Local folk/country oriented promoter John Atkins, in association with Paul Darwin at Bandstand Promotions, returns to the fray with a quartet of acts booked into The Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton on the evening of Monday August 26th. Welcome John Stewart, Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt and Peter Rowan.

However, there's a couple of ways of viewing this event; let's toss the negative side of the coin in the air first. Last time round GUY CLARK pitched in a stunning set at Wombourn(e) Civic Centre leaving me to eat my less than complimentary Brum Beat gig preview! TOWNES VAN ZANDT, over the three occa-



Townes Van Zandt

sions on which he performed for the Acoustic Roots team at Trysull Village Hall ran the gamut of shambling competence to dazzling virtuosity. teetering, on the edge has been transformed into an art form by Townes and I dearly love the man and his music. Forever and a day more. PETER ROWAN will always be, in my book, the antithesis of the latter. Someone should tell the persistent and recalcitrant yodeller that there's more to a concert than only that. I don't own a single Rowan record and don't ever intend to! As far as big JOHN STEWART is concerned, at one stage I'd

ARTHUR WOOD

have offered mega bucks for say, his toenail clippings. Gross, huh? On the strength of his most recent, live album, 'Neon Beach' (Line, import), I reckon that a 20 year long infatuation is fading. Fast. Four years on from 'Punch The Big Guy' the self penned, self congratulatory liner notes imbued 'Neon Beach' with a supposed importance and validity that it will never possess. four new songs, a couple of covers and six old tunes fell way short. Seems that by Wulfren time big John will have another live set, 'Live At McCabes' to tempt the faithful with. Over the decades John's lyrical drug has become duplication. Horses, the wind, fire, spirit and the sun and the stars. All repeated to indigestion level in song titles. Oh how we humans adore to remain in contact with the familiar. Don't we John? (You get to guess which one!)

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

In my opinion a prime opportunity has been missed with this particular bill. Here was an ideal chance to introduce some new folk/country blood to UK audiences and in the process (possibly) reduce the promoters outlay and the punters' admission fee. There is a whole catalogue of American performers in the same field as the aforementioned quartet who have yet to make their UK debut. If you're looking for ideas try Steven Fromholz, Richard Dobson, Tom Russell, Tim Keller, Buddy Mondlock, David Wilcox, John Gorka, Pierce Pettis, Rod McDonald ... And then there's the homegrown talent to be championed, Jay Turner, Terry Clarke, Morton ... Or, if certain prejudices could be overcome, there's Tish Hinojosa, Kimberley M'Carver, Eliza Gilkyson, Christine Albert, Patty Larkin, Christine Lavin ... Each generation and gender (and nationality) furnishes an endless stream of totally valid songwriters. Having indulged in the totally scurrilous, let's turn the coin over. How many potential seats could have been filled over the past decade if Acoustic Roots had regularly indulged in the use of higher profile venues? (or advertised? or admitted the value of press releases and PR? Ed.) As sure as concert promotion is a yoke, we'll never know. Big John's 1985 date at the Cornbow Hall in Halesowen was probably the highest profile attempted. Otherwise it was

Kingswinford, Wombourn(e) and other minor venues due West. SRO never became the tune by which the piper was paid. Maybe this brave attempt to come out of the closet is the breakthrough we've all prayed for. Me? I hope that I can still be counted as a realistic and active AR supporter.

Let's not forget that August is the time for cock-horse riding in a Banbury direction. Yes, The Cropredy Festival takes place on Friday 16th and Saturday 17th featuring as usual FAIRPORT CONVENTION and chums and guests. This year RICHARD THOMPSON's new band headlines the Friday whilst on Saturday JAY TURNER, STEVE

GIBBONS ALIAS RON KAVANA and KEVIN BROWN are among those helping out The Convention.

And finally: Stay glued to BBC2 TV on Saturday August 24th! That night there's a four hour Texas Music Special. Split into three parts it features Conjunto, with STEVE JORDAN and TEXAS TORNADOS; Blues with CLARENCE 'GATEMOUTH' BROWN and SNUFF JOHNSON and Country with JERRY JEFF WALKER, JOE ELY, LYLE LOVETT, KINKY FRIEDMAN and DOUG SAHM. Put those six packs and enchiladas on the shopping list right now!

Ah! Someone's just whispered in my ear that Guy, Townes, Big John and the other one will perform individual spots at the Wulfrun with many other surprises in store ... I'll probably be tempted (nay bedevilled) to don a disguise ...

See Y'all next month. Till then keep on forking over your gardens. Best Wishes, Clovis Garlic.

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“...None of them are as good as us”

The Sandkings talk to Paul Rees about pride, self belief and playing stadium gigs.

“Who said that?” The Sandkings’ drummer Terry Kirkbride leans forward in caricature Geordie disbelief mode. A quick reference to the tales, stories and rumours of his band’s alleged tired and emotional, drunk and disorderly stage state snaps the so-what demeanour momentarily. “I tell you, none of the other bands in Birmingham could dare stand up to us and say that,” he continues, “cause none of them are as good as us. We drink as much as the next f***ing band, that’s just jealousy that is. I don’t know what sort of world you think we come from, because as far as I’m concerned people can get jacked up and go onstage if that’s what gets them off. It’s what they produce that matters.” “We go onstage to entertain,” says vocalist Jaz Mann, picking up the baton. “We want a celebration and we want everybody to be involved in it. We’re not gonna stand there like statues looking all moody and pretentious. Anyway, I’d still rather somebody walk up and say we were drunk and crap than do nothing. I think that’s great. We want a reaction.”

Now though, The Sandkings and their incisive, immediate pop harmonies are fully fledged major label hot property. The productive development spell with the publishing arm of London Records has been followed by a genuine recording contract from the same company. It’s also accompanied by the inevitable corporate big wheel machinery and such concepts as collective responsibility. The Sandkings don’t need any justification. “At the end of the day it’s really black and white,” Mann affirms. “You want your records to be heard by as many people as possible. I don’t wanna stay in a little bedsit for the rest of my life with a racked off 60s guitar saying that I only want my records in indie shops. F**k that, I want this band to be playing stadiums this time next year.”

“It’s like bands today go on about this independent status thing,” says Terry, “and it means absolutely nothing now. Labels like Creation and Mute are big business people and you can’t release anything if you’ve got no money. Listen,” he stabs, “everybody in this game wants to play the arenas and stadiums, and anyone who says they don’t is a liar. What do you want to do, play the Barrel Organ for the next three years? That’s bullshit man.”

A SHORT PUNCHY SWIRL

The first step down the long and winding road comes in the shape of the ‘Temple Redneck’ 45. A short, punchy swirl it’s infinitely more direct than anything The Sandkings have previously offered. Against a rough backdrop of raw guitar and clipped percussion the vocals pour like honey and the melody remains an afterglow. There’s even a blatantly effective Hendrix steal and an understated point to the three minutes.

“Well basically that song’s about racial intolerance,” Jaz recalls. “I read this article in The Star that said that Asian people come into this country, go to their temples yet at the same time they’re like these really album is tentatively scheduled for early next year. “Whenever,” Kirkbride offers. “To start with we had these really long and involved songs that went on for ever. The whole album was going to have five songs on it, like Pink Floyd. We telephoned the A&R guy to tell him and he was like, ‘f**k off.’ So now it’ll probably have ten or more on it.”

EYES OPEN TO THE BUSINESS

“This is the first time we’ve had someone behind a desk marketing the band and they do get confused,” Mann reasons. “It’s really easy to market this band you just have to get inside The Sandkings. We see ourselves building slowly and continuously, we’re not gonna be an overnight sensation like EMF.



There’s no way though that we’re going to get a fleet of trucks and loads of lamps and go on like Van Halen. I mean, we have got our eyes open to this business.”

On the subject of anticipated success and expectation Kirkbride sighs, “People think that bands sit down 24 hours a day and analyse their career and where they’ll be in five years time. Who gives a shit? I’ll probably be bald by then anyway. It’s a bit too boring and obvious for you I think,” he tells the world in general. “People actually enjoy being in a

band and they enjoy seeing a little bit of the fruits for what they do. That’s what’s positive about it.”

Wildly contradictory, boldly arrogant and passionately committed The Sandkings are everything a snott nosed, tough brat young band should be. The global dreams of ‘next year’ may be highly debatable but at least the scent of fabrication is, thus far, noticeably absent. Maybe the upcoming tour will provide a few more conciliatory answers.

“See The Sandkings,” smirks Kirkbride, “and bring a bottle.”

Thaw Points

Mike Davies Dreams Of Ian McNabb

Let’s not mess around here. The Icicle Works were a great band, with great songs, who made great records. And hardly anybody gave a toss. Now they don’t exist. But thankfully their singer-songwriting mainstay, Ian McNabb does and is out forging a solo career, kicking off with a debut EP stunner featuring ‘That’s Why I Believe’ and the quite wonderful ‘Great Dreams Of Heaven’.

But to put history in the picture, last time the Works were heard of they were just signed to CBS. Not, it turns out, a good move.

“The original line-up had split and I’d recruited some new people. I wasn’t looking for a deal because I was still with Beggars Banquet but CBS saw a gig and said they wanted us. And since it couldn’t be any worse than Beggars at the time, I signed. But it turned out wrong and one of the main reasons was that after being with an indie for seven years to go to a major and have people come in the studio when I was recording and suggest what I should do was a real strain. I couldn’t stand the interference.”

Also, in retrospect, the heavier, axe hero sound of the new line up was ill-judged.

“The musicianship was tougher and more rehearsed and CBS wanted it rockier than it had been. So did I, but what happened was that it became distanced from the songs. It was a pyrotechnic affair, more about power than music. And I didn’t like it.”

FREEZER

So the Icicles got put in the freezer and McNabb’s been playing solo dates, just himself and keyboards. Despite being nervous about lacking the noise behind him, he’s found he’s enjoyed it. It’s re-emphasised his strength as a songwriter and it’s



restored a certain fire that had burned down through repetition. He’s also signed (ironically enough) to Way Cool for the EP and a second single in October, to be followed by a full band tour. It’s not, he points out, a vinyl demo for a major and he’s not driven by thoughts of huge advances. It’s about making music he believes in with people who are into it and not simply businessmen with their own personal living, stereotypes. Moreover, the songs have that same sense of optimism as something like ‘Love Is A Wonderful Colour’, even though they came out of a dismal period.

“I wrote all four of them over Christmas when I had no deal, no money and was not terribly happy. Like I wrote ‘... Wonderful Colour’ when I was on the dole and skint. Being at a low ebb brings something out of you. It’s like the distorted vocals of ‘Great Dreams’ are supposed to sound like someone reporting the news from the scene of the crime. There’s heavy, nasty things going on but the world’s still a great place.”

No Exploding Codpieces

Mike Davies Gets The Eve Ho From Julianne Regan

At the end of August, All About Eve are due to release their third, all important, album. Important because it's the first without founder guitarist Tim Bricheno and the first with his replacement, The Church's Marty Willson-Piper. Inevitably changes are in the air. Seeing them on their last tour it was hard to reconcile the melodic, almost fragile songs of the album with the hard rock posturing on stage. It seemed a schizophrenic band and singer Julianne Regan is the first to agree.

"The line-up with Tim hadn't been functioning well for some time. We were a somewhat flakey outfit who didn't know where we were going and that affected what we were doing. We were confused and didn't know what we wanted to be and we ended up with a hotchpotch. We were pulling in two different directions that simply didn't marry together. It was difficult for the record company too. They couldn't market us as a T'Pau outfit or me as a Tracy Chapman. Then there was that hippy dippy thing that was tagged on to us because the rock was tinged with folk. We fell into that even though it wasn't us and ended up floating around in a folk-rock limbo. I think folk music is beautiful on its own and I'm really interested in it, in fact I want to do a folk album with Fairport Convention. They're very busy so that's on ice at present but I always turn up and sing with them at Cropredy (Note: their live version of 'Who Knows Where The Time Goes' is included on the 'Circle Dance' album)."

This time the album takes a harder sound with the acoustic aspect taking a backseat for the time being, but as the first single was keen to point out that side of them hasn't gone forever. 'Farewell Mr Sorrow' may have been a direct pop song, but the B side, 'Elizabeth Of Glass' (which features a story of Victorian sexual repression and resulting misery built from samples off Radio 4!) was specifically designed "to show we're still interested in all things weird and wonderful too."

Inevitably the arrival of Willson-Piper has had a striking effect on the band, although his joining was pure chance. Regan, a long-time Church fan, had

met him earlier and when Tim left she decided to call him on pure whim.

"I never thought he'd say yes but The Church were on a semi-sabbatical. He worked with us for six months, now he's back in Australia doing their new album and he returns to us in August for another six months. It's a sort of timeshare. He knocks off his solo albums in a couple of weeks in between. The good thing is that The Church are very democratic. They've been at it so long it's not a matter of life and death with them. They amble along at their own pace and everyone has solo projects so there's a mutual respect for that."

Regan admits his presence has meant a new lease of life for the band. "He's obviously brought a different style and sound with his playing and songwriting abilities - and here I find we're very similar, I couldn't sing someone else's words if I didn't have an affinity with them - but also it's his attitude. He blew away our preciousness about things and allowed us to let our hair down a bit more when we were writing whereas before we couldn't do things because they weren't All About Eve. Prior to his joining we'd been through a couple of difficult years and I know it sounds corny but he was the missing link... I believe in the chemistry of individuals to make a band work and he had the missing molecules. We can be slothful and introspective whereas he's this loud, optimistic man. He doesn't hi-jack the band but he does give us a kick."

Regan has noticed a change too in her own approach to lyric writing, a combination of Willson-Piper's outgoing nature and her own maturity.

A PAINTBOX OF WORDS

"It's made me braver lyrically. You can become a caricature of yourself with a paintbox of words and scenarios you use all the time. The whole shift has made me not think twice about saying things. I'm less obscure. Certainly 'Farewell Mr Sorrow' is the most direct song I've ever written. It makes you want to be understood more clearly but without losing the 'poetry' in the way you say things."

Inevitably, although her songs were always to some



extent windows into her soul, she's now increasingly aware of exploring her femininity.

"It comes naturally with age. If I'd tried writing these sorts of songs when I was 18 I'd have been a charlatan because I wasn't experienced. I was a very late developer in all aspects of life. Until recently I've not been an authority on the things I can now talk about. I've become more confident about myself with age and more aware of my femininity. That can be swamped in a band when you spend all your time with exclusively male company. You don't become a bitter-swilling lad but you do lose touch with what's inside you."

At press time the album was untitled, although Regan favours naming it after one of the tracks, 'Touched By Jesus'. However, despite the song being more pro-religious power than anti-religion, she's aware of potential controversy, especially in America. Meanwhile they continue to prepare for the tour which brings them to Aston Villa Leisure Centre on September 11. Presumably this time the live show will be less schizophrenic? "It'll be very direct. We're honing it down a little. Before we had lavish stage sets verging on theatrical. Not exactly exploding codpieces but the progressive rock trappings came out. This time there'll be more emphasis on the music. More back to the roots."

"I think because our music has such a wide variety of styles, it's like we're almost impossible to categorise," says Dan Reed. "America in particular is really good at doing that, they want something that's tailor made for an audience. It makes money faster, it doesn't take that much work."

'Dan Reed Network' and 'Slam', whilst lavishly praised and highly tipped, evidently did take work. Both drew heavily from dance and rock influences and both failed to realise the levels of commercial success many had predicted, despite touring spots with the likes of Bon Jovi and the Stones.

Things will be different the third time around. 'Mix It Up', the first single from Bruce Fairbairn produced 'The Heat' set, is a stylish, captivating fusion of danceability, hip-hop and abrasive guitar. It is intriguingly different and instantly familiar. It reads worldwide hit. It is also the first time the Network and Dan Reed have really been one.

"Well I'm an only child, so I've always trusted my own instincts," Reed explains. "As of last year though, I've started learning a lot about cultures and that people working together is valuable. I wanted to practice it not to preach it so I got to working with the band. I started seeing new things coming out and started seeing them happier. And they didn't even know they weren't happy before."

This collective enthusiasm is obviously preserved on the title track; a pulsating rush that could be Def Leppard or could be Prince. An adaptability that has been shaped by circumstance. "In the early days in the clubs, we had to play danceable music but we didn't like dance music. We liked having the Marshall amps raging and loud guitars," Reed recalls. "We had to mix the two things together to get gigs

Reed and Rights

Paul Rees Joins Dan's Growing Network



and we just stumbled across the music we liked playing."

The band's multi-racial composition may have helped and refined this process but it has made mainstream acceptance more difficult. Black people, even after Hendrix, aren't supposed to play rock music in any form, it confuses the neatly mapped genres.

"I'm not sure that music overall has an affinity for one culture," is Dan Reed's response. "Basically the world is having a problem being open-minded about music right now."

Which is probably one of the reasons why Dan Reed is increasingly confronting the world and its faults in interviews and music. How conscious is he of the line between entertaining and preaching?

"As an artist it's a choice between do you ignore it and try to hope it gets better or do you address the situation," he admits. "I feel that I have to address it because one day I'll have a family and I want people to know that I care. I think the fact that we claim to want to find solutions is message enough. So many people get caught up in wanting to change the world through art that they forget to change themselves." Dan Reed's much publicised head shaving took personal change to an extreme. It also cast him as an oddball, a strange eccentric.

How much of this reaction was foreseen or planned by Reed himself?

"It wasn't done to be eccentric," he insists. "I was quite scared about it; that we'd lose a lot of fans and I'd have to change career. We did get a lot of hate mail, people saying that they didn't listen to our music anymore. I was starting to believe this 'rock star of the 90s sex symbol' stuff and I had to get away from it. I challenged myself and that was important to me."

The next challenge is likely to be the opening position on Van Halen's US tour, followed by a 1992 visit to these shores. By that time 'The Heat' will have firmly positioned Dan Reed Network as major names and the man himself can solve another problem.

"I don't necessarily subscribe to the point of view of making money purely for personal benefit. I'd like to make lots of money but I'd like to find out how you invest it in the future."

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First the good news. Eurosport is back under new ownership and thanks to a French TV company! It's still the best Sat TV sports channel as the recent coverage of the Tour de Suisse cycling race proved.

The bad news: Filmnet have altered their sound frequency so decoder owners can still see, but not hear, films that they aren't supposed to see anyway. I did warn you in Brum Beat, back in February '91, but even so, I never expected them to change the sound and not the picture. Call in at a local Filmnet decoder dealer and check if your equipment can be upgraded. August on BSkyB promises to be a good month for films with premiers for the truly brilliant 'Shirley Valentine' (Movie Channel, 4th, 8.15pm) with Pauline Collins as the frustrated Scouse housewife who finds love and some, on a foreign holiday. Steve Martin crops up too in the hugely enjoyable 'Parenthood' (Movie Channel, 18th, 8.10pm), a film that really does rattle along at a (wise) cracking pace and shows to all the world that Martin is a comic genius. Sky Movies+ has a naff

SPACE JUNK

KEVIN WILSON

The only Satellite - TV column in the West Midlands ...

load of films, but the '+' comes into its own with a live and exclusive Hyde Park concert by Luciano Pavarotti on Tuesday July 30th at 7pm and another world wide star, Rod Stewart, is also live in concert, this time from Berlin on Friday July 26th at 7pm. Two large scale events taking place on BSkyB. Where to now BBC and ITV?

On Sky Movies+ on Tuesday August 27th at 8pm, there's the WWF Summer Slam from Madison Square Garden in New York. The sport (I use the word metaphorically) of wrestling American style is becoming hugely popular in the UK and

thousands now tune in to BSkyB's coverage. The stars of this mega entertainment earn mega bucks and inspire followers to fanatical worship and god-like adulation. The Summer Slam will feature macho man Randy Savage getting hitched to the glamorous Miss Elizabeth before the real fighting begins as Hulk Hogan and the Ultimate Warrior take on the fearsome Sargeant Slaughter and his private army of cohorts. Is it for real? Have you ever seen blood, dislocations or fractures. Of course not! It's extremely well put together, no nonsense hype that requires expert timing and hours of practice. Entertainment it most certainly is. Sport it most certainly isn't!

MTV's European baby is celebrating its fourth birthday on August 1st. Viewers will have noticed that the ace presenter of Channel 4's excellent 'The Word' programme, Terry Christian, now has his own show on MTV, XPO on Saturdays (12.30-1.30pm) and Sundays (10-10.30pm). He also appears on MTV Prime weeknights 5.30pm-6.30pm. Very good he is too.



Pauline Collins encounters Tom Conti in Shirley Valentine on the Movie Channel in August

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KRAFTWERK**The Mix**
(EMI)

Any band that has had as much influence on modern music over the last fifteen years or so as Kraftwerk, deserves the accolade 'best ever electronic group'. This remix of old favourites will have to do as a new offering until an original album appears in the new year. Ralf Hutter and Florian Schneider, the creative hub of Kraftwerk for some twenty years, use their classical training to make some supremely crafted monotonic muzak. Witness the metronomic 'Robots' and the now truncated but still superbly atmospheric 'Autobahn'. A new version of 'Pocket Calculator' now boasts an English accent, 'Computer Love' has a new lick of paint about it and 'Trans Europe Express' now rail roads into the feet as well as the senses. Call me old fashioned, but remix albums to me mean rip off. In this case it actually does mean value for money and then some!

Kevin Wilson

VARIOUS ARTISTS**One Man, One Vote/
Sampler Five**
(Greensleeves)

Two newbies offering top quality ragga and reggae. 'One Man, One Vote' puts the social voice back into dance hall reggae courtesy of the likes of Big Youth, Leroy Gibbons and Bunny Rugs with a spiritual title track, but it's the big names who really score, Shabba Ranks offers 'Build Bridges Instead', Dennis Brown pops up with 'No More Walls' and Cocoa Tea duets with Judy Moffatt on 'Reach Out Speak Out'. 'Sampler Five' (at budget price) is more straight dance floor cum ragga with Shabba Ranks in lighter mood on 'Golden Touch' and Dennis Brown more groove than polemic on 'Home Boy'. New stars shine too, MC Papa San linking with exciting Fabiana on 'It's Not Enough'. Two very good value offerings.

Kevin Wilson

LYNYRD SKYNYRD**1991**
(East/West)

A new album from Skynyrd and one that, regardless of its title, is firmly rooted in the halcyon days, and much the better for it. 'Smokestack Lightning'. 'Backstreet Crawler' and 'Money Man' are timeless con-

RECORDED
DELIVERED

federate boogie, with the trademarked spit'n'sawdust geetars, gruff vocals and honky tonk piano liberally applied.

The man behind the mike, Johnny Van Zant, is a sensible tribute to icon (and brother) Ronnie, and bolstered by the gospel tinged female backing vocals it's as if 'Street Survivors' were last year's model. Best of all are the genuinely emotive ballads 'Pure And Simple' and 'Mama' and the backward glance nostalgia of 'End Of The Road'. A couple of clumsier moments can't detract from a surprisingly worthwhile and credible return.

Paul Rees

TERRY CLARKE**Shelley River**
(Minidoka)

'Shelley River' finds Terry Clarke musing on his heritage, following his father's Irish roots to examine his own, apparently burgeoning, celtic spirit.

Through fifteen stunning songs he moves from thoughts of his own conception to the fragmenting of families by migration. Clearly there is a parallel to Terry's love of American music, his last album's Texan recording location and this set's return to a sparse folk feel, that is occasionally touched by the same enchantment that haunts The Everlys' singing of Irish ballads. Clarke himself provides one essential key to the album with the track 'Sea Songs'. A sea song, if I read him right, is one that transcends the simple enjoyment/entertainment parameters normally tied to music; sea songs are, well the lyrics cite Van Morrison's 'Into The Mystic' as an example ... understand? It is an album of remarkable depth, of lyrical inspiration and precision, and of gnawingly addictive, linear melodies. It is an album that has to be lived with. Patience pays huge dividends. It is not a record that reviews easily, any attempt to capture the spirit will short change it. Only a track by track eulogy would, in my opinion, suffice and clearly we do not have the space here. However let's take one example, 'American Lipstick', the tale of a family broken by emigration in which those left

behind try to ease the loss by reflecting upon the emigrants material success in the USA as displayed in gifts of 'sweet sugar cane and Kentucky rye whiskey'. Clarke sets the mood with lyrics that display a painter's eye for detail that turns the song into a visual delight.

'Shelley River' is a mature, crafted, superlative set that has in a few weeks become an all time favourite. Collections of songs as moving and involving as this are rare. As rare as 'Sea Songs' in fact.

Steve Morris

SAM PHILLIPS**Cruel Inventions**
(Virgin America)

The only Elvis connection is Costello who adds acoustic guitar and loans Rude Five members to the session cast. Sam's quirky off centre vignettes then have Van Dyke Parks arrangements and a T Bone Burnett production to further recommend their hazy recall of Michael Stipe's acoustic impressionism.

Steve Morris

MARILLION
Holidays In Eden
(EMI)

In which Steve Hogarth unquestionably makes the frontman's role his own. It could be, that he's straightened the bands overall approach, removed the pretentiousness/adventure (?). However, the changes have focussed the whole enterprise, making the playing and vision gel into something solid and powerful. Marillion are now making huge sound landscapes, epic yet breeze fresh.

Steve Morris



Marillion



Bonnie Raitt

BONNIE RAITT
Luck Of The Draw
(Capitol)

With a Grammy on the mantelpiece for her previous album 'Nick Of Time', it would be foolish to expect any great changes here. Consequently the production, by Bonnie herself and Don Was, retains the deft light bluesy/jazz feel of that set.

In other hands this is a recipe for yawnsville, but Raitt's stunning blues flavoured vocals and incisive slide guitar playing bring an edge that others can only wish for.

And then there's the material, all grade A with songs by John Hiatt and Paul Brady among Bonnie's own. You also get a gem of a duet with the great Delbert McClinton. Smooth it may be, then so is Jack Daniel's, for which it is, incidentally, a great mixer.

Steve Morris

VARIOUS
The Rhythm Divine
(Dino)

32 tracks with flare (and platforms) from an era when dance music had elegance and variety. Chic, Sly Stone, Isaac Hayes, Isley Brothers, Curtis Mayfield ... Splendid.

Steve Morris

JERRY JEFF WALKER
Navajo Rug
(Ryko)

One of the original Austin new wave country singers, JJ (real name Paul Crosby) remains best known for penning 'Mr Bojangles' and a collection of good time Texan albums with The Lost Gonzo Band. At 49 he looks like he ought to be Don Williams but he still sounds like the prototype on which they modelled Guy Clark. Joined by various former band members and with a largely uptempo mood (boogieing on 'Detour' and Steve Fromholz's 'Rockin' On The River', Texas waltzing with 'Just To Celebrate' and 'Flowers In the Snow'), this is his best in years, no finer than on the autobiographical reflective 'Blue Mood'. A must for any self respecting roots country collector and wouldn't it be good to see him down The Breedon one day soon.

Mike Davies

FOUR MEN AND A DOG
Barking Mad
(CBM)

Hailed as the best new Irish folk band in years and built around guitar, banjo, fiddle, accordion and bodhran this is traditional roots (plenty of reels, jigs and polkas) with 90s bite. Good steppin' and fetchin' sits happily alongside impeccable covers of Richard Thompson's 'Waltzing For Dreamers' and Peter Case's 'Hidden Love'. And any band who can get away with the line 'He's no moron on the bodhran' has to be reckoned with.

Mike Davies

FATHER FATHER
We Are All So Very Happy
(Go! Discs)

Lifting the band name from a Marvin Gaye lyric sets a standard that's almost impossible to achieve. Father Father are almost equal to the task. Vocalist Jonti Richardson is soulful without resorting to mimicry or cliché; the well crafted songs are danceable without being 'dance' and the lavish choir and orchestral arrangements are kept in check to let the music breathe. Put simply it's a fine, very fine, intelligent debut that meets its own lofty aspirations.

Steve Morris

VAN HALEN

For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge

(Warner Brothers)

Ignoring the corny, and not particularly amusing, title, Van Halen's third album with Sammy Hagar finally sees them escaping the inimitable shadow of David Lee Roth. It helps to realise that Van Halen are now an entirely different band to then, replacing the party ethic with a sidestep into a more refined, less glitzy brand of adult rock.

'F.U.C.K.' is a perfectly conceived, expertly crafted record that captures a quartet of musicians at their mutual peak. The likes of 'Poundcake', 'Runaround' and 'Judgement Day' kick up a fuss without ever losing control, 'The Dream Is Over' and 'Top Of The World' are tailor made for hot summer radios. As ever Michael Anthony, Alex Van Halen and Sammy Hagar are impeccable, whilst Eddie Van Halen is still a fretboard magician. No longer a knowing trick bag, his playing these days fits into the parameters and demands of each song. On 'Pleasure Dome' and 'Right Now' the insistent melodies and improvised excursions lift Van Halen onto an entirely higher level.

'F.U.C.K.' isn't without its fillers - 'Spanked' and 'In And Out' - but as a whole it is a multi-layered, gradually revealing collection of fine music. In this field there is no competition.

Paul Rees

MARK GERMINO AND THE SLUGGERS

Radartown

(RCA)

Germino's third, and best, album finds him teamed up with a hard edged band and travelling a similar highway to Steve Earle And The Dukes. His songs, all the better for the extra muscle, are scalpel keen tales of urban living, worker exploitation, intolerance of brother to brother etc.

The music too is taut and almost intuitively supportive of Germino's lyrical mood swings with guitars alternately pungent and Byrdsian.

And for those who mourn the demise of near hit character 'Rex Bob Lowenstein', he's resurrected on the CD as a much tougher cookie!

'Radartown' is an unqualified success and a few equally good gigs would see Germino joining the super league.

Steve Morris



Crowded House

CROWDED HOUSE

Woodface

(Capitol)

Guitars ripple and melodies invade your very life. Songs such as 'Fall At Your Feet' and 'Whispers And Moans' tug at sleeves and insist that they be described as gorgeous. 'Woodface' is what reviewers have in mind when they idly type the phrase 'classic pop'. It does get a little saccharine at times - the sickly string arrangement on 'All I Ask' - but this is balanced by the sugar coated, cod liver oil consumerist debunk of 'Chocolate Cake'.

Steve Morris

MARTIN KENNEDY

Martin Kennedy

(Mach One Music)

Kennedy's small label debut album is an impressive yet frustrating collection. Whilst he is undoubtedly talented, his style magpie approach removes any sense of focus. He opens with the Ultravoxish 'House Of Thieves', follows through with a pure pop confection and then offers a rather moody piece, for example. Ultimately it has to be seen as a portfolio rather than album and in that light it is a success. One can only hope that he's given the opportunity to do it properly with a band replacing the rather passe and strait-jacketing synths.

Steve Morris

THE JAM

Greatest Hits

(Polydor)

19 singles. Adrenalin fuelled, youth ignited, Who inspired rocket launch through to diamond hard, fully realised classics before bowing out with a flabby, pseudo-soul-man surrender.

A career in one hour. Fine band, great tombstone.

Steve Morris

THE GPs

Saturday Rolling Around

(Woodworm)

Recorded in 1981 live at Broughton Castle, one of only six gigs they ever played, this is a real collector's item; the only surviving record of a band that comprised Ralph McTell, Dave Pegg, Dave Mat-tacks and Richard Thompson. The audio quality isn't always great but there's no faulting the music (mostly covers) or the sheer sense of a goodtime being had by all. Just for tempters there's 'Together Again' a la Fats Domino, 'Zimmerman Blues', Dylan's 'Going, Going, Gone', a couple of Holland, Dozier, Holland stompers and a rousing 'Great Balls Of Fire' finale. Good Stuff.

Mike Davies

KIRSTY MacCOLL

Electric Landlady

(Virgin)

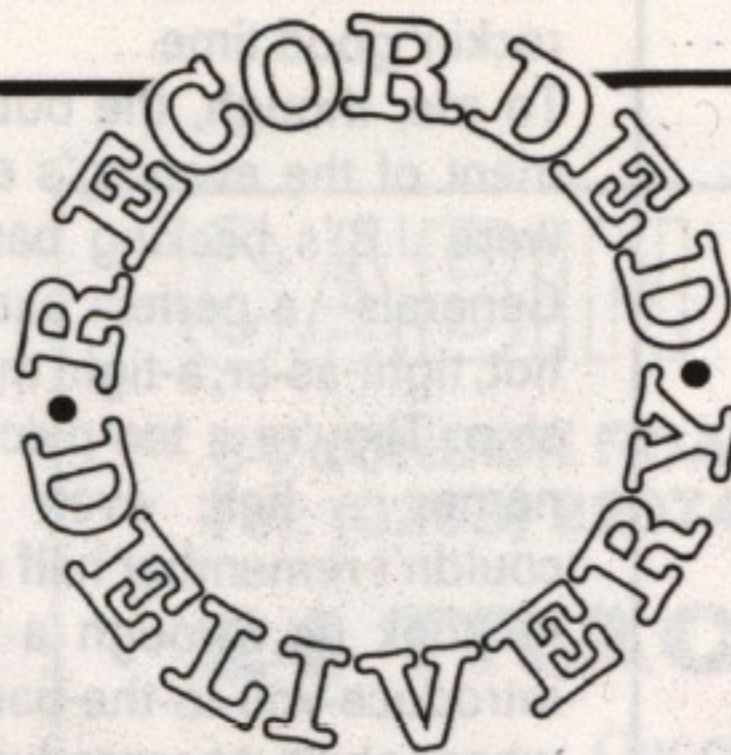
A couple of (commercial?) detours into stale dance rhythms apart, 'Electric Landlady' is a remarkable collection of memorable melodies and pithy lyrics plotted by MacColl in association with some fine collaborators, Johnny Marr, Mark E. Nevin, cult popster Marshall Crenshaw and Pogue Jem Finer.

The strictly non synth sessioners are equally lustrous, style skipping with ease and the final blending by producer (and artist's spouse) Steve Lillywhite confirms this as destined for cult classic status in years to come.

Steve Morris



Kirsty MacColl



LOUIS JORDAN

Five Guys Named Moe

(MCA)

With jump'n'jive sanitised into a west end show and, in hoarier form, absorbed into the gig circuit as guaranteed goodtime it's no surprise to find the originator's cherished moments dusted down.

All of the hits are here but more importantly so is Jordan's aphorism for sensible living, 'What's The Use Of Getting Sober (When You're Gonna get Drunk Again)?'

Billy Sidell

RON KAVANA

Home Fire

(Special Delivery)

One in the eye for the album every four years brigade. This is Kavana's third long playing outing within a year! Having given us the second excellent Alias Ron Kavana band set and master minded the 'L.I.L.T.' charity collection, he now appears with a stunning solo set.

Well, solo in the sense that it's his record, though he is surrounded by some fine players, whose skills are well displayed by the fact that most tracks are first takes.

Throughout Kavana keeps his natural eclecticism in check, staying true to his Irish roots, with thirteen traditionally inspired new tunes, a mixture of the passionate and pointed.

Steve Morris

PETER HOLSAPPLE AND CHRIS STAMEY

Mavericks

(Special Delivery)

Until recently old bores would have pointed to Stamey's golden past with The dBs and his links with bona fide cult Alex Chilton to open ears to this set. But now Holsapple is the 'fifth REM' and hipness by association will bring an audience to 'Mavericks' and its dozen great songs and classic pop harmony.

For once the wheels of hipness and talent have turned to meet at the same place at the same time.

Steve Morris

BLYTH POWER

The Guns Of Castle Cary

(Midnight Music)

It's a criminal injustice that BP aren't hailed as the best folk-rock band in Britain, especially given their biting sharp common-man left-wing viewpoints, sense of satire, wit and the combination of Josef Porta's broad West Country vocals and the articulate, (often historical themed), lyrics. Not folk-rock in the Steeleye/Fairport sense, but akin to New Model Army with rasping guitars while still leaning to traditional sounding melodies. This is their best yet, with bitter attacks on enterprise culture, American imperialism, political hypocrisy, ('A Little Touch Of Harry In The Night'), fairweather morality, the North/South divide and the lot of the ordinary man. A pastiche of 'Bless 'Em All', a snatch of 'Wouldn't It Be Luvverly', a quote from 'Henry 5', Attila's fiddle on 'Animal Farm' and major diamonds like 'Paradise Sold', 'Castle Cary', 'Inside The Horse' and 'Trooper Shaw' are the spices but there's not a duff moment to be found. In years to come they'll be cited alongside Ewan MacColl. William Blake would be proud.

Mike Davies.

THE SAW DOCTORS

If This Is Rock And Roll, I Want My Old Job Back

(Solid)

Having swept the polls in Ireland and scored the biggest selling single in Irish history ('I Useta Lover'), the good Doctors now intend to chainSaw the UK with their alternately rowdy and romantic melodies, lyrical humour and a general exuberance that tumbles out of their guitars, mandolins, fiddles and organs.

Compared to a combination of The Pogues and The Beautiful South, there's also dashes of Buddy Holly ('Why Do I Always Want You') and The Undertones ('That's What She Said Last Night'), but what comes across most strongly are the keen ear for blood-rousing choruses, the serious mind, (plenty of religious refs), behind the good-time humour and the ability to write songs that refuse to quit your head, most notable 'Irish Post', 'Freedom Fighters' and the tearingly poignant 'I Hope You Meet Again'.

Mike Davies.

LIVE REVIEWS

JAMES BROWN NEC Birmingham

Whycliffe opened his evening, and I couldn't fault him - very polished and very funky in a smooth kind of way. Everything was here from his brand new LP, 'The Roughside', and he warmed up the audience admirably. I preferred him, though, at the Institute - a smaller, seedier venue suits him better.

James Brown! JAMES BROWN! JAAAMESSS BROWWWNNN!! The Godfather/King of Soul. A sort of funky Frank Sinatra. And like that particular Godfather-like (but of a different sort) figure, J.B. relies on a reputation built up decades ago. He cannot cut it like he could in the 60s and 70s, and it occurred to me tonight that he doesn't actually do much singing either - more of a collection of "Huh!"s, "Ow!"s and "Good God!"s. But that's ok - funk is about space and feel. Anyway the soulful harmonies were provided by backing singers, Bitter Sweet, who possessed virtually unsurpassable vocal talents.

Don't get me wrong - I love James Brown and I loved this show. It's just that he didn't do very much. Still, he was there! 'Living In America', complete with L.A. Lakers girls' lookalikes (all legs and hair), plunged the polite NEC audience into a funky Vegas-style extravaganza, which spread itself into the whole J.B. repertoire, from 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag', through dancefloor classics (for me anyway) like 'Get Up Offa That Thang', 'Funky Good Time', 'Good Foot', to the eagerly-awaited, though rather disappointing rendition of 'Sex Machine' - I suppose ol' Jimmy's no longer that lithe wet dream that he used to be, although, having said that the pretty, pouting, dancing poppets blew him enough kisses and surreptitiously stroked him in passing enough times to make us believe he must still be a sex-symbol to someone (or were they told to drool

over him?). Whatever, it all made for a rockin' good time.

To me, though, the outstanding element of the evening's entertainment were J.B.'s backing band, The Soul Generals - a perfect example of red-hot, tight-as-er, a-tight thing musicianship. They're a ten-piece (ask me no names - hell, even J.B. himself couldn't remember half of them when he took us through a little 'let-me-introduce-you-to-the-band' type ditty) whose ability to reproduce exactly (yet with a certain 'raw' edge that allowed what seemed room for jamming, but what was more likely the result of extremely arduous rehearsals) every James Brown record you've ever heard. That horn section, man, - wow! I've been dying to see James Brown live for years. I always knew what to expect from having seen live vids, - he's not going out gracefully, he's still pumping it out, and he's not afraid to make a bit of a fool of himself - I admire that. Godfather of Soul? Yeah, why not.

Max - x

HUE AND CRY Symphony Hall Birmingham

Alright, so the Kane brothers argue so much it makes the Duckworths seem like a honeymoon couple, but has their fraternal conflict and constant battling allowed 'true' artistic strength to be released as a by-product? Well no. The performance was near flawless, the songwriting was intelligent, and they did display more subtlety than the 'verse/chorus/verse - send for a good producer' brigade. But something was clearly missing. Was it the Hall? - A superb venue that takes acoustic excellence to new heights, but hasn't yet demonstrated that soulful passion and raw, sweaty atmosphere power are part of its repertoire. Perhaps this is merely a symptom of the safe bands that have so far tried to tap the resources of Symphony Hall? Whatever the reason, Hue and Cry played their set to a quietly appreciative audience who, as tradition dictates, went 'wild' as the last song and encores were played. In soccer terms, the score would probably read: Enjoyment 2, Excitement 0, leaving the diehard fans to trudge home in a state of reasonable contentment, hoping for more commitment in the return leg. Unfortunately, Hue and Cry had only

one chance to deliver, and put their only shot over the bar.

Highlights were the cover by Tom Waits, and also Abba's 'Name Of The Game', a quality song able to benefit from the Hall's perfection. Their new album material from 'Stars Crash Down' was well enough received too. The two brothers have allegedly got over their past troubles and found a new peace and understanding between them, perhaps summed up in the last lines of encore 'Rolling Home' - 'I've found my wife, my brother, my country and me.' Unfortunately, they haven't yet found the necessary excitement that a live band needs.

Andy Tipper

ALBERT COLLINS Alexandra Theatre Birmingham

Albert Collins sure has the blues; sadly it's the Chuck Berry blues! He wanted payment before travelling to the show, payment before taking to the stage and a generously filled hospitality lounge. In return the Birmingham Jazz Festival audience were given a perfunctory 50 minutes of going through the motions that only fleetingly hinted at greatness.

Given that the staging, lighting and sound equipment were all top class (though Albert wouldn't know about the latter having refused to sound check!) it's hard to see what's wrong with the man. Maybe in time honoured blues tradition he has been ripped off in the past, though a long association with Bruce Iglauer's Alligator set-up would suggest the opposite, but taking it out on audiences won't do at all.

The Iceman is going to find himself frozen out.

Support, C.J. Chenier and The Red Hot Louisiana Band had no tantrums at all. They simply served up a boiling cauldron of musical gumbo. Blues, rock, country and zydeco. In fairness the theatre setting was a little restricting for what is undoubtedly a red hot club dance band, but their Louisiana two steps were the night's highlight.

Steve Morris

WILD MAGNOLIAS / REBIRTH BRASS BAND Cannon Hill Park Birmingham

It was, I'm told, the result of the Jazz Festival Director pacting with the devil for just one afternoon of perfection. Sure must have been a good deal. The sun blazed down on thousands of frying bodies whilst the spirit of New Orleans oozed from the stage. Musically it should have been the Wild Magnolias day, after all they have the plumed visual splendour of the Mardi Gras Indian tribe and the traditional call and response chants gone funky that are familiar to many, courtesy of the Neville Brothers. They also have a funky bass-man and a Hendrix flavoured guitarist. Sadly it was all too one dimensional and whilst it may have been hypnotic to some, the word boring springs to my mind.

In the event the day went to the Rebirth Brass Band. Not on points but on a full K.O. Two saxes, two trombones, two trumpets, tuba, bass drum and snare drum that dipped into funk, Big Band, Charlie Parker and more with disarming ease. And these are young kids, not seasoned pros. And that's the key, there was no respect for 'Jazz' here, they just played the ass off the music that comes natural, music they love, music to have fun with, to kick around. They displayed an energy, wit and power that could give jazz a good name. Maybe it's punk-jazz and it's time for the B.O.Fs to move over.

Steve Morris

GIPSY KINGS NEC Birmingham

Who would have thought that a flamenco band who sing not one word in English could draw thousands to the NEC Arena? But the Gipsy Kings possess a gift which transcends all borders: passion.

Their fiery blend of driving flamenco guitars and rhythmic Latin pop (first heard by many Brits in discos on the Costas) is compulsive. When combined with the dramatic, almost Arabic, phrasing of singer Nicolas Reyes (the Kings' prince of wails), the sound is irresistible for romantics.

Often dismissed as muzak for the sangria and suntan set, The Kings are actually tapping a deep and ancient musical tradition. This caravan of French/Spanish friends and relations produce an intense Gipsy/Iberian lament to balance every pop tune like 'Volare' and recent single 'Baila Me'. But it was the glorious sound of those stunning half dozen strumming guitars that created a fiesta atmosphere at the NEC.

Leon Burakowski

FEET FIRST Barrel Organ Birmingham

Feet First are nothing if not obvious. The kinetic whirl of scatty rhythms, the colourful bobby popping and the blatant references to 'Planet Funk' are transparent funky metallic clues.

To begin with this approach works, despite a sound mix that is all dinosaur bass and biscuit tin percussion. Feet First are accomplished musicians and physically adept performers which compliments the low-brow dance rock nicely. Unfortunately the repetition of the same ideas and ceaseless pace is too much for sustained exposure.

The songs are never opened out to offer a varied space or welcome relief, consequently the groove disappears through the nearest window. At the end a couple of head rushes are vaguely recalled but the rest is a distant, blurred memory.

Like many others Feet First have a detectable talent and a blinkered vision. The motto, sometimes, is to walk rather than run.

Paul Rees



James Brown

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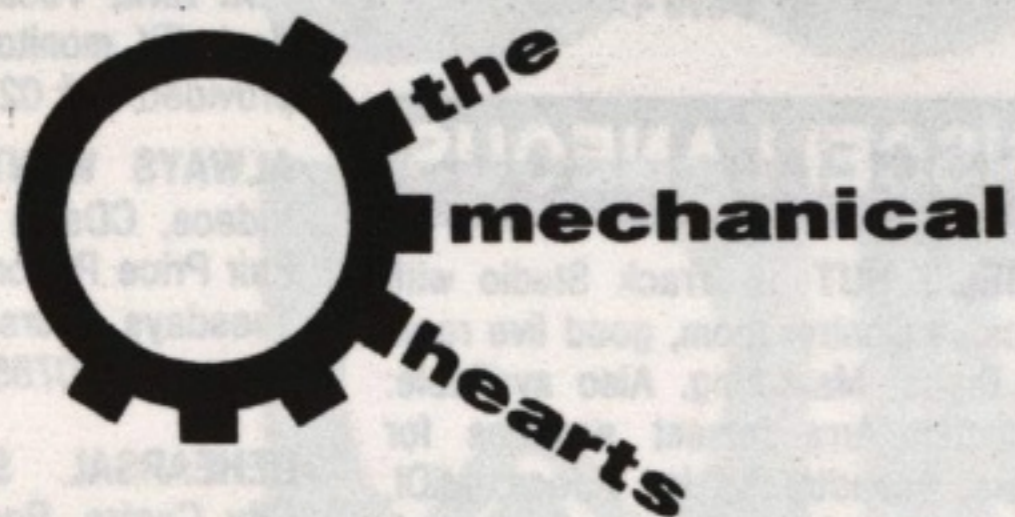
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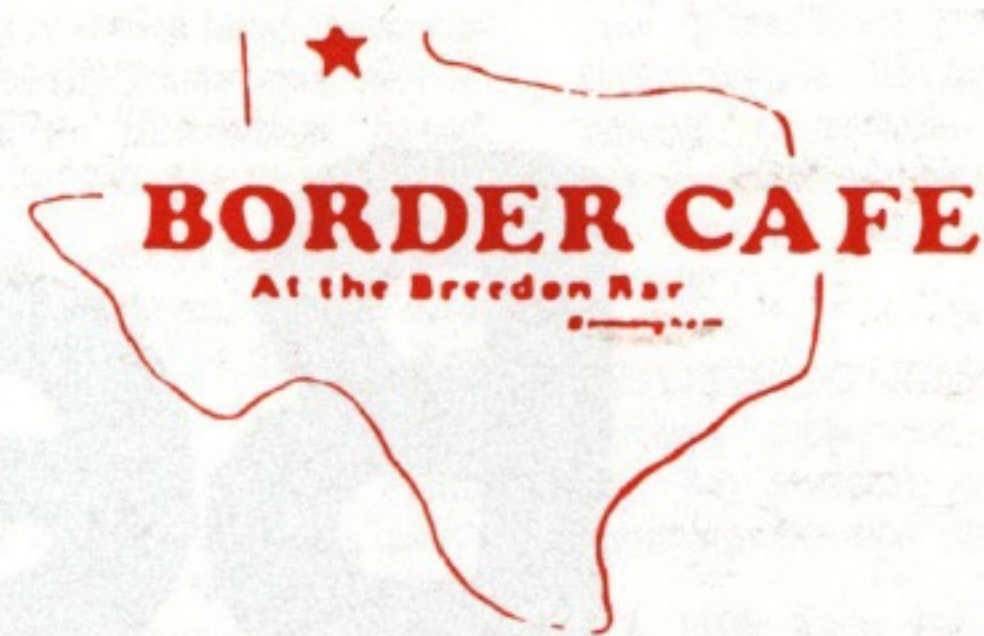
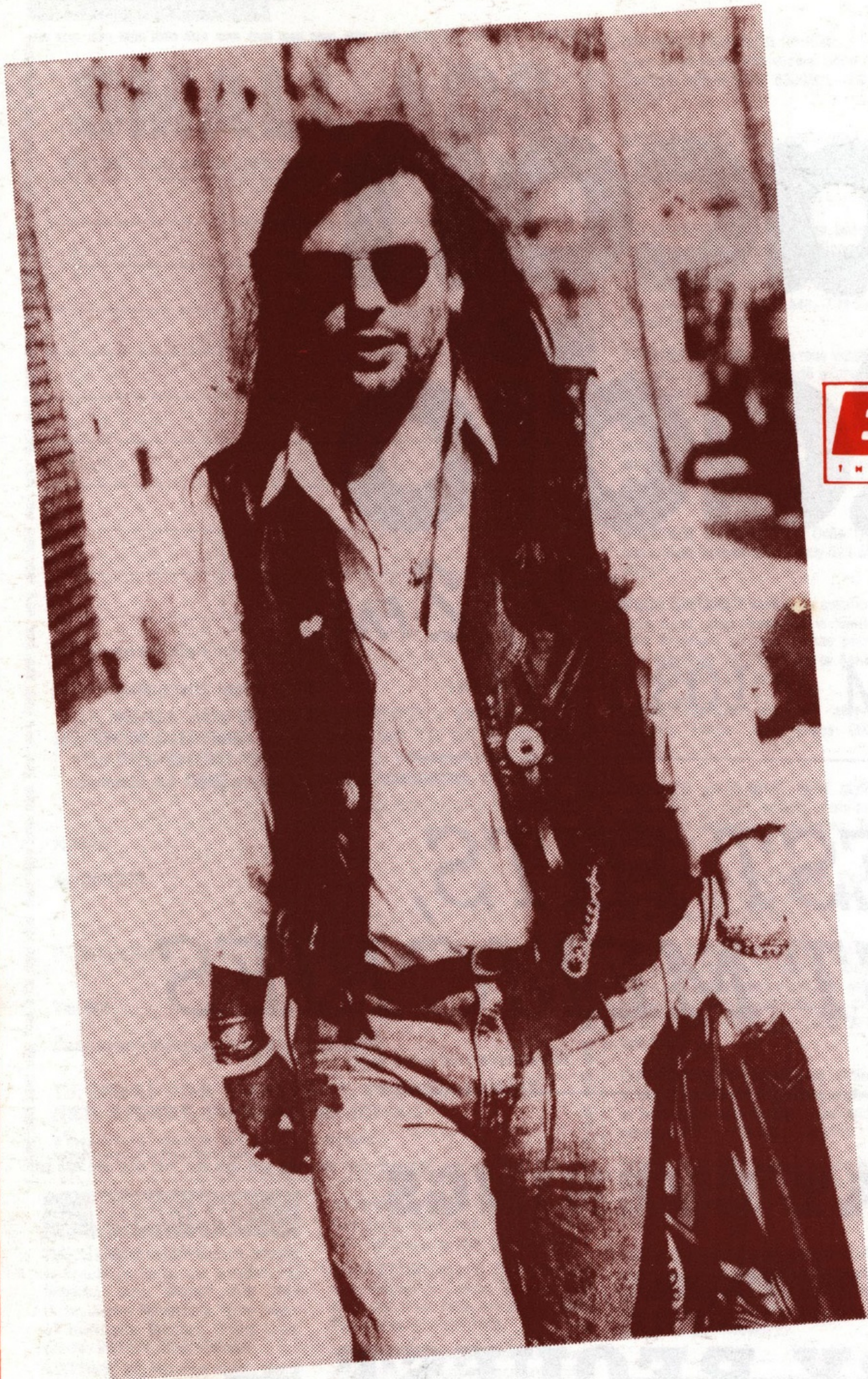
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