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SCENE AND OVERHEARD

CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S ROCK MAGAZINE

MARCH/APRIL

ROCK GROUP COMPETITION HEAT REVIEWS
THE DESMONDS : THAT SAXE
THE PLEASURE HEADS



THE POPPYHEADS



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Cover photograph of The Poppyheads
by Melissa Sargison

Welcome to issue 12 of Scene and Heard.

As usual we extend our thanks to the bands for launching the
mag though we're not sure exactly who to thank at the time of
going to press.

It's been a busy first quarter of 1988 and wasn't it a great rock
competition? Best yet. We think so anyway. Obviously a large
chunk of this issue is devoted to the contest so a couple of
features like county gossip have been shelved, together with
one or two reviews, so write on Ben, keep trying Effe.

In our next issue we will be focussing on some indie and even
national bands: Stump, Zodiac Mindwarp, The Membranes,
you know the sort of thing I mean. Also we hope to bring you
lots of news on what The Bible have been up to so far this year.

Paul and Phil

This Beeno, Heat 2 runners up, have what is best described as a flexible line-up, so I talked to the central figure in this band of itinerant troubadours, Richard Heeps.

Richard started playing solo, with an acoustic guitar, as the Poet Painters in 82/83. "The Batman was my first gig, supporting Slap Kat. I'd only been playing the guitar for about six months. Jon Stanley, who went on to form The Lovely, joined me on drums and we always seemed to be supporting a rockabilly band for some strange reason. Then we were joined by Rosalind Metcalfe on keyboards. She hadn't played in any bands, she was more of a classical pianist. I was writing the songs at first and

THIS BEENO

then Jon and Rosalind started coming up with their own material. The Poet Painters came to an end because we all went off to college. We were going to reform and do the first Rock Group competition but everyone had their own ideas and nothing

came together. Funnily enough, I was going to do that one with just me and a girl singer. We pulled out in the end and my brother's band, The Brink, took our place. "I then moved to Reading, working in a school for the handicapped for a year. I came back to Cambridge and I basically wanted to make a tuneful loud noise, if such a thing exists. I recruited Martin Kay (bass) because I knew he'd been in a punkish band. This was three months before the second competition. At the time Martin joined, I started writing songs with John Gregg. Me and John would write these songs and This Beeno would play them." They entered the second competition with Clive Bass (drums) completing the line-up. They got nowhere and shortly afterwards Richard and John recorded under the name Promenade "because Clive didn't want John in the band, something about his age, which I think is ridiculous." With Clive gone because "the drums were just wrecking the songs". John started to play live with This Beeno and various other musicians were brought in. "The whole idea, all along, was to write these songs and bring along musicians to brighten them up, give them an edge. The idea was to experiment with different things, and find out what worked. In the end it was best with just me and John and something else, like the trumpet. I'm not so sure about the 'cello, it looked very good but never sounded good live." The next step was the heaven tape, which sold about 120 copies. "People bought it because of the songs, I think that's really brilliant."

They entered the third rock competition, which was the only time they played two gigs in a row with the same line-up. "We got as far as the semis and if we had got into the final we'd have just done an acoustic set, just me, John, and Richard Sewell (trumpet). We thought you had to have gimmicks, like smashing up cardboard



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guitars. We don't like to rely on gimmicks, I don't think it's necessary. When you start doing those kinds of things, like Colonel Gomez, you've got to keep on doing them. Their semi-final appearance was "our last gig with a rhythm section. There's always been a battle between the songs and the rhythm sections, and now that battle has ceased."

This year's competition saw This Beeno down to just Richard and guest vocalist Claire Brooker (of The Principle). The rest of the band can make the semi-final but the rules forbid them to appear. It was certainly a courageous move on Richard's part to do a song ('White Walls') acapella but he hopes his semi-final place was not due to the bravery vote.

"At the heat, on the new song, 'The Hook', I wrote a verse while I was playing. I'm liable to do that even when I'm playing with the band. I want people who can just go up there and improvise. That was certainly the problem with This Beeno in the early days because they just went along with what I said and it was my responsibility to come up with the ideas. When Claire

came along she put her own ideas in, I didn't have to tell her what to do. I think she's as mad as me. When we're playing live, John seems to read when I'm about to make a mistake, and unlike any other band which is led from the drums, all the timing comes from my vocals. Obviously when you play solo it's a big advantage, because I do make a lot of cock-ups."

"The only political song we've written is 'Gatling Gun'. People get 'Out On The Wire' wrong, it's not a song about wars or politics, it's just anti-violence. As a person who's felt violence (two fractured skulls) it's just my reaction to it really. Everyone says 'Love's Got A Hold On You' is a real nice song but it's about being a bit of a bastard at the same time.

"There are some really good musicians in Cambridge, but there are no songs, and a band without songs has no foundation in my book. It's just playing to the groupies. Actually, I'd quite like to do a cover of Spiritwalk's 'If I Looked Through Your Window'. I could see John and myself doing an acoustic version of that song. I'd like Cambridge bands to do covers of each

others' songs. I'd love someone really famous to record a This Beeno song.

"I'm not a guitarist, I merely see the guitar as a tool to write songs. I don't find the guitar generally a good way of expressing oneself. I think a trumpet can be really expressive, but the guitar has been used so many times that you become numb to it.

"Both John and me are obsessed by seaside resorts. One of the most disturbing things that happened to me in recent times was when Shanklin pier fell down in a gale, because to me Shanklin is the greatest but it's crawling with mods. In 'Heaven' it's saying that there is something beautiful in that decaying Victoriana."

In the future we can expect a ten track tape from the band, possibly featuring re-recordings of material from 'Heaven'. The line-up this time will be Richard, John, and trumpet player Richard Sewell together with guest musicians. This tape will be sent to record companies (unlike 'Heaven') and will probably be their final fling so catch them before they're famous or gone forever!

Steve Hartwell



“We are inspired by The Rolling Stones, Cambridge is inspired by Bowie.”

The past twelve months have seen The Poppyheads evolve from insipid individuals catching the tails of the the C86 dream into a serious pop band. On the eve of their first record release, they offered Robert Linney their thoughts on Cambridge and music.

Recent live reviews of the band, the NME for instance, have not spared criticism. What are your feelings on comments such as “this band should not be allowed out in public”?

Rob (guitar and backing vocals): It doesn't particularly concern us. In fact, we expect it to be honest – in no way do we profess to being that technically adept. It's not what we're here for.

I saw you at the rock competition, and the crowd around me were very much in keeping with the regular Cambridge audience, believing that The Soft Boys were still together, and waiting for the next Feelgoods concert. They seem to regard you with bemusement.

Rob: As far as the rock competition is concerned, it was almost a relief that we came no higher than sixth. The whole Cambridge attitude spells mediocrity: if a young Jesus and Mary Chain or Primal Scream had been in there, they would have fared no better.

Reviewers constantly raise the point of your lack of communication and movement:

David: What do people expect? What on earth is the point of announcing 'this is a slow one', or some crazed movement, all in the name of fake passion? Thankfully, you don't follow the

Jim Kerr principle...

David: What...of acting like a dickhead?

Every review centres around the sixties revivalist tag:

Rob: That's people's opinion, but we would rather be influenced by The Byrds than The Cure or The Sisters Of Mercy.

The Walker Brothers over The Mission?

Nigel: No contest.

Through this conversation, we have had a backdrop of Creation singles, 'Revolver' and music from The Doors. Are you believers in the theory that rock'n'roll has laid its boundaries, and all that remains is introspection?

Nigel: Great records are still being made today, but the period 1964–8 was special...I mean, Dusty Springfield, Scott Walker, Love...it goes on. Today, the charts are so depressing. Records sound manufactured, soulless...

Yeah, but pop's an industry, though.

Nigel: Perhaps, but do people actually see T'Pau as an antidote to Stock, Aitken and Waterman? If you could be anybody, who would it be?

Rob: George Harrison (Revolver period).

David: Buffalo Springfield.

Nigel: Mo Tucker.

I agree with you when you say the Cambridge music scene reeks of mediocrity: people's aspirations seems so small.

Rob: Definitely: bands seem so concerned with self-congratulation, and reaching out for that tour of East Anglia.

Last summer, you featured on that well-known vehicle for mediocrity

that is the Trevor Dann Rock Show. He seemed to treat you with irreverence, just managing to avoid asking “are you serious?”

Rob: That was a really odd experience: he evoked this 'town and gown' concept which apparently divides the Cambridge music scene, and attempted to make a point of us not wanting to play Cambridge every other week...like it was some kind of sin.

Personally, I find it very dispiriting that he uses the show for his pub rock fondness. Are you serious?

Nigel: No, we're only in it for sex and drugs.

Rob: We're serious in that we believe in what we've done, hopefully without the self-esteem the Cambridge bands place on themselves, secure in the knowledge that we're above all this. I mean The Sardines playing sweet soul music.

Is it not all a form of rivalry. I have heard other bands describe you as not even endearingly abysmal.

Poppyheads: Like us, they are entitled to their opinion, but the fact is our records are played on the John Peel show; our record will sell

more than their tapes. The difference between us and them is that we are inspired by The Rolling Stones and not David Bowie.

The Poppyheads are to release a single, 'Cremation Town' on Sarah records in March. The label has successfully released records by The Sea Urchins and The Orchids to date; indications are that the Poppyheads' release will follow suit.

Their rambling live sound has been somewhat refined for the record's release. 'Cremation Town' backed by 'Dreamabout' will serve as a testament to The Poppyheads' legacy: they are to split up in the summer.

Rob Young will spend a further year in Cambridge. He promises a new band, taking his vision one step further, combining The Byrds with Sonic Youth, perhaps. Personally speaking, I think The Poppyheads have never fully transferred their ideals to performance or record. They know as well as I do that they are not going to disturb the world or people's beliefs – nobody can, it's all gone too far for that. Their existence has been necessary in Cambridge; they have proved to be an antidote.

POPPY HEADS

This could be the make or break year for Peterborough's Pleasure Heads. Their debut LP 'Hard to Swallow' should be in the shops any day now, and Phil Johnson gives it a thorough going-over. S&H scribe Paul Attwood (who reviewed their first single for this magazine way back in July 1986, in issue 4) caught up with the band at their recent Burleigh gig.

You've had a couple of singles out on an independent label, and an LP is in the pipeline. How much progress do you feel that you've made since your last S&H interview, eighteen months ago?

Pete H: We've made some, but we're not happy with it. We are a lot more professional than we were eighteen months ago, but in terms of popularity, we've not made much progress. We do have some sort of following, but realistically we have not made any giant leaps forward. Pete E: It's going to take a long time. We're maturing now in writing songs. Kev: I think we're happy with the progress we've made, musically: it's the promotion aspect that we tended to fall down on. We need some bigger gigs – support slots to top indie bands.

Dean: Getting into the indie charts is the next big step. People don't reali

ze how difficult it is to break out of local band status.

So what are you doing about it?

Pete E: We've signed a management deal now. We've got two local people who are going to manage us. We're trying to get bigger gigs. Ultimately, we're hoping to get signed on by an agency so that we can get big tour supports – that's what we're after, hopefully playing to an audience who are more receptive to our kind of music.

Pete H: When you look at the bands we have supported – Wedding Present, Then Jerico, Curiosity Killed The Cat, The Shop Assistants, Balaam and The Angel – it looks quite impressive, but they've only been one-offs; when a band has played in the area, and they wanted to shove in a local support.

Donny: When you get a tour support you've got eight or ten nights guaranteed, playing to a fresh audience each time. We've set up a gig in Glasgow, and when we get there, there may be only a handful of people there.

Dean: But that's showbiz, lads.

Last year was one of relative

inactivity. Why?

Dean: Last year was one of building up the band's personality. Kev joined us at the beginning of the year, and we've written out a whole LP's worth of new songs. What we've learnt is how to organize the band – it's got to be more efficient than before. I suppose we haven't played that many gigs, but that doesn't really matter – we've played the ones we considered were worthwhile.

Last year's gig at the Sea Cadets Hall was a disaster: the old Pleasure Heads would have laughed it off. Do you feel you're getting too serious?

Pete H.: We did laugh at it, but it was embarrassing because we've got to the stage where we shouldn't make a cock-up like that. We should be able to have a laugh without making prats of ourselves. We don't want to be laughed at all our lives. We do want to keep the humorous element of the band, though.

Dean: Our manager Rob Jones compares us to Alex Higgins. He says that people want to watch Alex Higgins – sometimes he plays crap, and sometimes he's really brilliant.,

but people still want to watch him.

That's an analogy that we'd like to keep.

Ambitions?

Pete E.: When you see bands like Crazyhead, Gaye Bikers on Acid, who are basically 70s rubbish, doing so well, you get disillusioned. I think we're better than those bands, but what we need is some breaks. It'd be nice to be in the indie charts. We want to get as far as we deserve to go: That Petrol Emotion status would be great.

Kev: As long as we make a living out of music, I think we would be satisfied. To get to a certain status, i.e. Top 40, you need to sell out to a certain extent. We don't want to do that: I think that long-term credibility is the key word.

**The Pleasure Heads:
Hard To Swallow LP
(Ediesta Records CALC LP43)**

This represents their finest moment to date in a recording studio (The Music Room, under the guidance of Dave Colton), and confirms the improvement shown in their technical proficiency over the past eighteen months.

The first track, 'Sold', is the obvious candidate for a future single release. Guitars take off in full throttle and work out a catchy riff for this boppy pop song. 'Whip It Up', the next track, would make a classic Velvet Underground title, and indeed, there's a touch of Lou Reed's vocal style in Pete's deadpan singing. Donny and Kev lay down menacing, bluesy guitar riffs: a surprisingly hard edge to the Heads' traditional sound.

Dean takes over the singing on 'Crystal Clear', one of the highlights of the album. Lots of tribal drumming, and the guitars are actually playing (as opposed to the normal thrash/strum sounds).

'Something You're Above' is taken from the Heads' last 12" single. A John Peel favourite, the high point being Kev's manic slide work. Side One closes with a rerecording of an old Heads' mclassic 'Hit The Ground', which makes the original recording sound like new country!

A Phil Spector drum pattern opens 'Frankly (I'm Not HP)', the opening track on Side Two. There's a classic hook line that could have come straight from a Monkees or Turtles song: – obviously the band's homage to the 60s.

Dean's back on vocals for the next two songs, 'Treasure' (the last song) and 'Harvey's Cane Is Out', which for me, is the highlight of the LP. An insistent bass riff, a wall of guitar sound and pounding drums are the main ingredients in this classic sleazy psychedelic pop tune: watch out, Sonic Youth!

Kind But Blind, the closing number, takes the psychedelic influence one stage further. There's a definite dream-like, acid rock feel to what is normally the closing song in their live set. But the Heads, always the jokers, don't leave you in a spaced-out mood: there's a bonus 30 seconds of the closing music for Warner Brother's cartoons – you know, the one that's played as 'That's All Folks' appears on your screen. And that is all, folks!

ADS

PLEASURE





Indiscretion

Indiscretion started out as hot favourites for this year's Rock Competition as they won the Best New Band award last year. Their performance in the first heat was criticized for the over-the-top solos from the lead guitarist and the bassist. This upset them greatly, particularly Janne (bass) who managed to drag it into virtually every part of the interview...

Kevin (drums): Two years ago we started off as The Uninvited. Richard Fairclough (guitar/vox): I put an ad in the paper from which Kevin and our ex-guitarist Mark (Fowell) came, and there were the three of us for a very long time because we couldn't get a bassist. We got Janne in March '86. We did a successful gig at the Burleigh, 150 people, that was our first ever gig. We couldn't believe the turnout. That's how the band

started and then we changed the name to Indiscretion in November 1986.

We thought 'The Uninvited' was too punk. So we entered the rock competition and that's when it really took off. We've done three demos but all of them for one reason or another came to nothing. They were all done at Bat studio (run by The Mood Assassins), the last one was really good quality for an eight track. Mark going out on us meant that we didn't want to use it.

Janne: We weren't happy to see him leave but we thought as a band with him we couldn't go any further, and I think he felt the same. It was quite amicable. We just fell apart as a band.

Kevin: We'll be there for In The Pocket's (Mark's New Band) heat. Moshing away. There's no hard feelings, he just wanted to go and do his own thing, and he has.

Richard: It's ridiculous because we didn't sell any demos but we'd do a cover and put 'all songs Fowell/Fairclough' because we wanted to do a sort of Lennon/McCartney thing but even that was ridiculous because we had to add 'arranged Indiscretion' because we all contributed.

Janne: It used to be Rick doing the melodies, Mark coming up with licks,

me writing basslines, sort of individually. Now Rowan's in we're writing music more together.

Rowan knew Janne through various friends and joined the band in August last year.

Richard: I didn't know I was going to be the singer. Originally Mark was going to be the singer and then one day he decided he wouldn't. I got the short straw.

Rowan: When we do the next demo we're going to make the sound as raw and live as possible.

Kevin: It's nice to experiment, when we did the last demo Mark did a little bit of keyboards.

The next demo will feature some of their older recordings and this time will be on sale. None of the band had played in anything more serious than jam sessions with school friends before Indiscretion. So how long have they been playing?

Janne: Two years.

Richard: Since just before the band started

Kevin: Since I was 10 or 11. My dad used to play drums.

Rowan: I was given a three-quarter sized guitar, when I was three or four, started playing from about then, my dad teaching me as he plays a bit of

guitar. I now have music lessons in Cambridge, and guitar lessons in Basildon.

Kevin: I'm learning music.

Richard: I'm going to have singing lessons soon.

The competition

Kevin: I don't think it's the sort of thing that can be taken that seriously. We get out there and enjoy it.

Rowan: We've got to make a big effort on stage because if you just stand there you don't bring it across.

Richard: You want everyone else to enjoy it so you should enjoy it.

Kevin: What I hate is going to see a band I've never seen before, especially a Cambridge band, and all they play is an hour, and hour and a half of just their songs.

Janne: We talked to a couple of judges and they said if you do a cover you won't necessarily be marked down.

Richard: So we did.

Janne: You've got 20 minutes, we did as much as the other bands of our own songs then we filled out the rest of the time with a cover, and it was very short.

Kevin: That's not to say we don't have any more songs. But it's for our enjoyment as well. Cover versions are all the rage, but that's not why we did it. We just play what we feel like playing.

Richard: We didn't take that tune just because it was an AC/DC song but because everyone knows it.

Janne: The reason I did a bass solo was because all big bands do bass solos. Doing a bass solo is just a part of the general performance, it's not an ego trip. All good guitarists have solos in songs, a solo spot is just part of a song. It was like a major concert in 20 minutes, trying to put in every aspect we could.

Kevin: We're just merging the two styles, funk and metal, it's just coming together now. We're just starting to find out what we really want to sound like.

Richard: Recently is the first real work we've done towards the songs. Of course, melody's important, we've just realized that.

Kevin: The lyrics are becoming more important than before, but I don't think that at our age we've got anything particular to say. Being in this band is a really brilliant laugh, it's just really good fun. If we can progress further we will. We are not going to sit on our backsides as much as we have been doing. It's as serious as it can be at the moment while we're still at college. We're all at college, except Rowan who's still at school.

Janne: You try being sixteen and playing a gig at the Sea Cadet Hall, where there's older bands on the bill, and you see the treatment you get. There's a feeling of being looked down on. When there's older people doing the soundcheck they treat you like some kind of juveniles. We resent being criticized by people who do it because we're young. All good rock bands are over the top. Isn't it a great thing to watch a young band go out there and enjoy themselves, in front of a big crowd?

Kevin: It's all good experience, we're young and we're learning.

Steve Hartwell

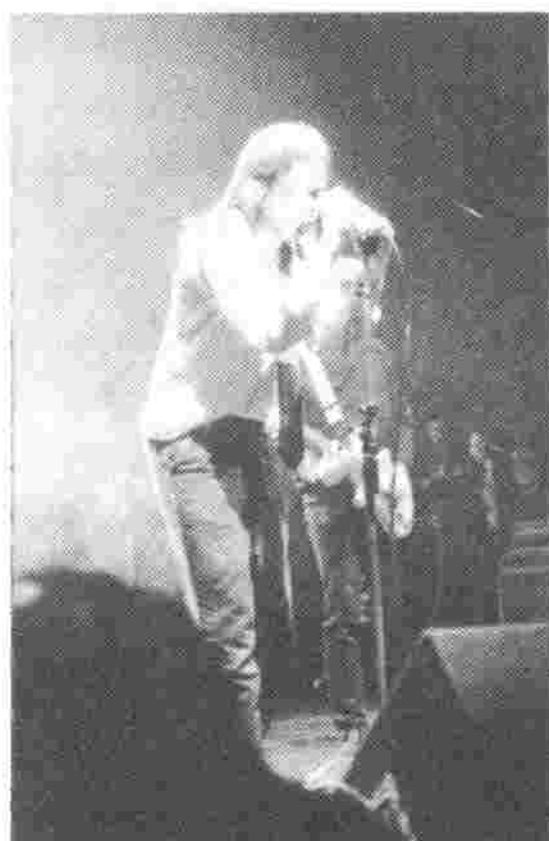
R O C K C O M P E T I T I O N

Heat 1 R E V I E W

Seconds out, year four, round one. Pity the judges were in the bar as Graham Buxton (like father, like son) got things going. On time! First to brave the rather subdued (bored? partisan?) audience and the Corn Exchange acoustics were Chat-teris' Curious. This time the PA was not as overpowering as in previous years so the actual sound was quite good, but the music?

Well, Curious are good players, even on unusual instruments like the Chapman stick, but seemed to delight in showing off their virtuosity. Thus endless solos lengthened the songs out to anything up to 10 minutes. The music was very 60s electric folk, the vocalist even sang with a finger in her ear! They only managed to get through three songs in their set, each prefaced with a brief outline of what they were about. Clearly these hippies haven't noticed the 70s or 80s and neither, it would appear, have the judges, who put them third overall.

Similarly, the heat winners, Nutmeg (below), seem to be



living in the past, in their case early 70s heavy rock. The focal point, and perhaps the major factor in their success, is the lunatic antics of singer Tom Dalpra. Compared with his performance in the 1986 competition, however, Tom seemed to be just going through the motions. If they are not careful they are going to suffer like Colonel Gomez, where the visual side completely dominates the music. At least they sound more original than the Colonel and in 'And In England They're Going Mental' they have a good song. Winners, I suspect, mainly for their visual appeal.

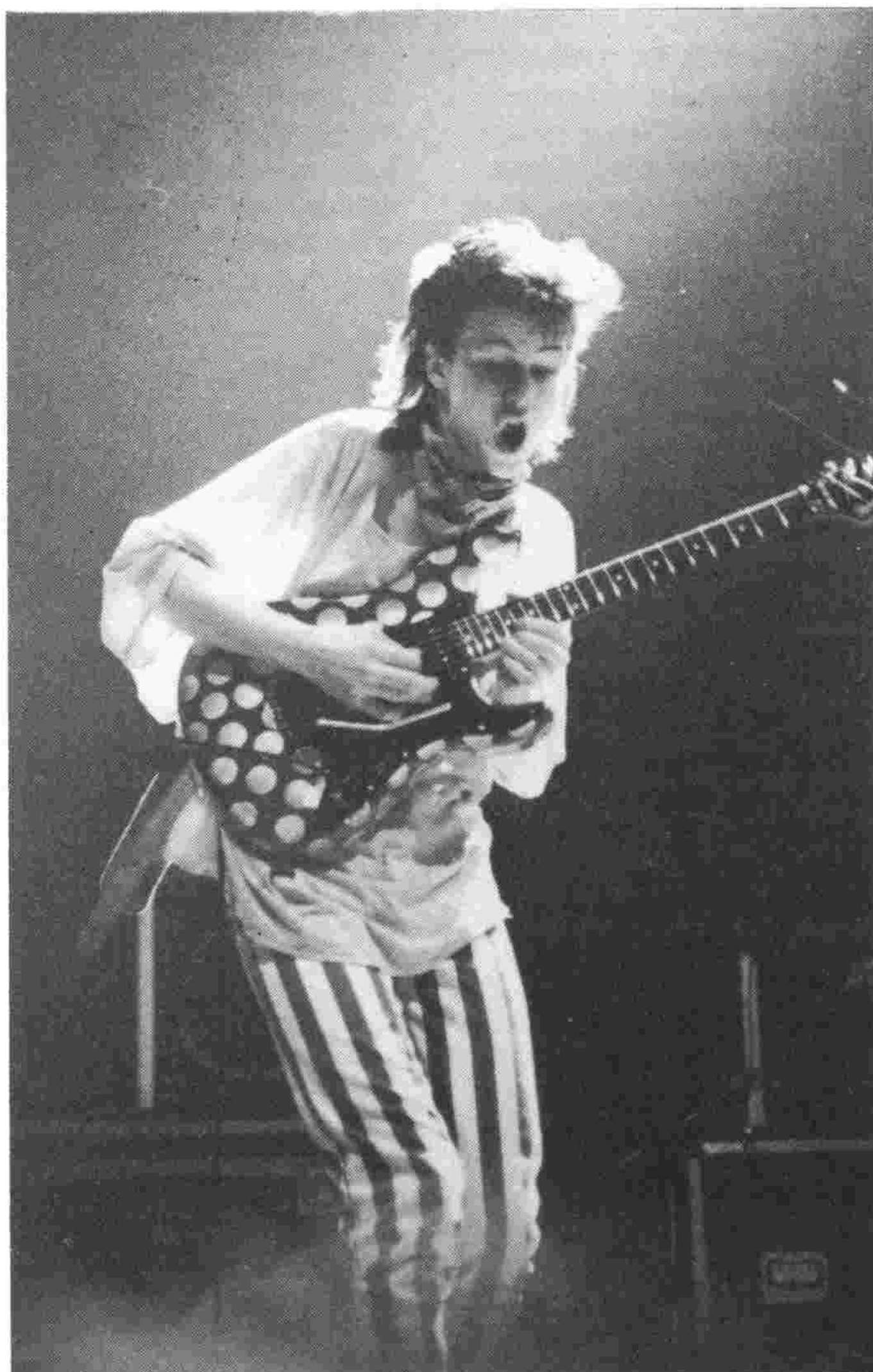
In complete contrast Turn To Blue were much more subdued, just standing still in front of the mikes. This was their first gig with a drummer and it showed. Their songs are based on great wodes of synthesizer chords which totally destroy the dynamics of the rhythm. The material sounded rather undeveloped, particularly with regard to the lyrics, which seemed to consist mainly of two lines repeated ad infinitum. Still, there were some good tunes ('Rain Parade') and with a bit

more work on the dynamics and lyrics they could be very good.

The Bogus Renegades (left) brought their fan club, presumably the school friends of this very young band – they are all sixteen. The music was unfortunately very boring and bland. How does such a young band afford all the gear? Completely unmemorable.

Next on were The James Dean Quartet, the first of the two CCAT bands in the competition. They played funk music, strangely enough without the currently-fashionable slapped bass. The songs were tedious and untuneful and weren't helped by the rather poor vocals. Indiscretion (below) have changed guitarist. The new

guitarist seems to have an obsession with playing solos. At the end, at the beginning, in the middle. In fact, the first song was one long solo. Towards the end of the set, when he was embarking on yet another solo, someone lobbed a couple of beer glasses at him (just as well they were plastic). Nor was he the only person in the band who was prone to soloing, the bassist also had a go but was mercifully brief. Does anybody enjoy this self-indulgence? The funky band of last year seems to be going HM (they did AC/DC and Van Halen covers) but they haven't jumped one way or the other yet. They have one good song. They came second. Are the judges all there? Completing the evening's en-





ertainment (apart from those ridiculous results) were The Fires In Arabia. This band has risen from the ashes of The Parody, whose bass-playing mohican has transformed itself into a short-haired guitarist for this band. They played some new songs, some Paordy songs, and a cover of 'Teenage Kicks'. Badly. 'Teenage Kicks' really did them no justice as it only served to emphasize all the failsings in the band which they had carefully avoided in their own songs. Could do better. Organizers 1, Judges 0.
BOXING'S SAINT

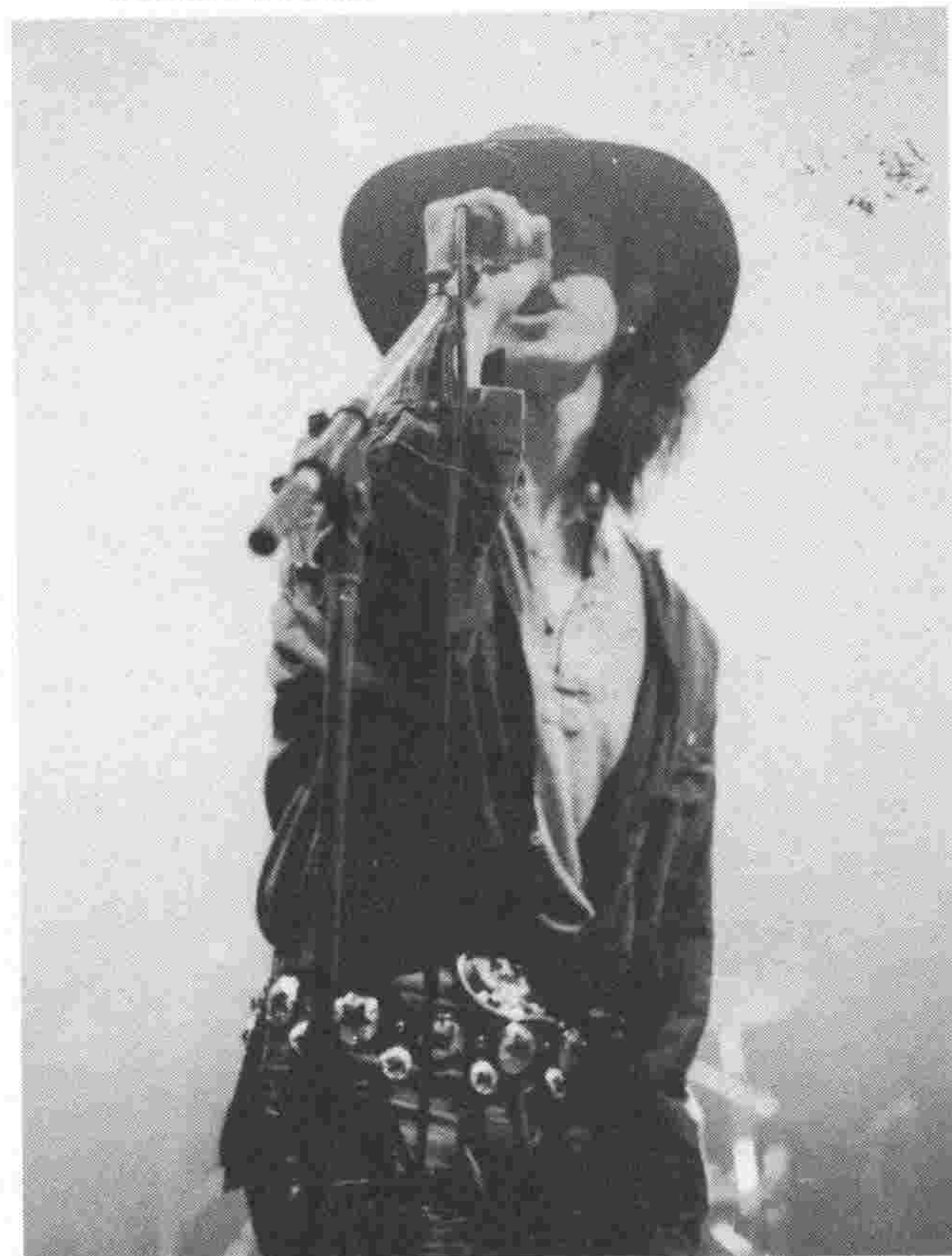
Heat 2

REVIEW

Delayed by the zealous searching of punters at the door, I arrive to find Infernal Death already pounding through their set. I am immediately seized by this grubby spectacle of backdated haircuts and demolition riffs. As they play, their supporters take turns to climb up on stage, then dive headlong back into the crowd. Infernal Death (right) are two fingers shoved in the face of this upwardly mobile competition and its style council of judges, while their fans seek cranial damage to the sound of recycled metal. Eventually a bouncer, singularly more terrifying than the band, strides to the front of the stage to stop the diving. For a

moment, two cultures clash. In his smart suit and bow tie, he glares with contempt and disbelief at the moshing masses, while behind him the Infernals keep spattering out some gut-level riff. But no-one dives again, and even 'These Boots Are Made For Walking' is a subdued affair. HM is meaningless unless played like this - too fast, too loud and with total disregard for taste or decency. As Infernal Death's sweaty fans elbow their way to the bar, a more mellow generation steps forward for Abraxas (left). They deliver a bluesy, pub-rocky set that includes 'Black Magic Woman'. They are the most competent and least interesting band in this heat, saved from total oblivion by Pete Harris' guitar work. As soon as Session 57 take the stage, their game plan is clear. This is devoted 50s revival. Their team jackets make the high-school confidential references, while the big Gretsch guitar looks and sounds right for the part. I feel Session 57 sell themselves short by having so little of their own material. Instead, their set includes a stack of standards like 'Maybe Baby', 'Cherished Memories' and 'Rock Around The Clock'. But all are played with respect and affection for the songs and the era they plunder. The PriestS of Vengeance (left) are a recently-formed line-up with members drawn from Hollow Land and Red Over White. They generate a rich and powerful sound, driven by a drum machine and overlaid with thick wedges of

guitar. Singer Gary Shepherd is the first front-man of the night to look seriously in command of the stage while he performs. Perhaps their ideas will become clearer with more rehearsal and better material. But I find this arch-gothic density to be oppressive and uninspired, and I am not sorry when they finish. After all that din, the enigmatic, double-edged whimsy of This Beeno. Following some doubt about the line-up of this year's This Beeno, Richard Heeps courageously takes the stage alone. It's a big risk for one man and his guitar to follow the bombast and volume of all those 'rock' bands, and there is every chance that this shy and unwilling star will be dissipated in the great hall. But that doesn't happen, and this is the most intimate and absorbing performance of the night. Later, The Principle's Claire Brooker joins Richard for two songs including 'Love's Got A Hold On You'. A shiver



runs up my spine. Delightful. In las years's competition, The Mullahs's big brassy line-up coupled with Shaun Murphy's queasy falsetto put me in mind of both The Higsons and The Farmer's Boys, both bands now defunct. With Shaun's increasing confidence, he has learned to make more intelligent use of that swooping, crooning voice, and tonight The Mullahs present a harder edge than ever, playing as if they already know they've won. The Mullahs, to borrow a

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Heat 3

REVIEW

There's no point beating about the bush – The Wood (below) looked like the obvious victors of this third heat of the rock competition. From the moment vocalist Siri charged into the set, tossing her hair like a woman demented, The Wood had 'winners' written all over them. With their swirling forest of sound, they were perhaps the most impressive band – though not necessarily the most entertaining peddling their wares tonight. But they really need to pry out those Banshee/X-mal splinters they've got under their collective skin. A bit more humour could work wonders for them, though

perhaps they are afraid to let a lighter side shine through, and then risk sounding poppy. Get my drift, maan? This darkness The Wood have made such an integral part of their songs makes them slightly dodgy and – dare I say it – dated. Anyway, you can stuff my opinion, because they were ecstatic winners – and I wouldn't want to tarnish their glory for one second. And well done to Siri. At last, a female singer who's not relying on a cutesie-pie image to compensate for lack of talent à la Minogue/ Tiffany and the current schoolgirl brigade. But what of the bands who didn't quite twig? First on,

phrase, are a band whose time has come. That sets them apart from the has-beens and would-bes in this heat, and the judges put them in first place.

The Catholic Boys from County Hell have the most promising name of the evening, promising as it does a fiery celebration of release from some repressed and misspent childhood, perhaps under the tutelage of some elderly nun, and with pornographic magazines being handed around the back of a classroom. Regrettably, none of the roguish, pognish promise comes to pass, since their line-up is sadly under-rehearsed. The rhythm section has no rhythm, and the

rest of the band is left shrill and floundering. They should return to County Hell and sort themselves out in time for next year's competition. When it's all over, I think what a long, strange heat it's been. Many divergent threads of pop competed for recognition tonight – metal, goth, blues, rock'n'roll and some jiggery-pokery. The Judges opt safely for the thoroughly-modern Mullahs and This Beeno's sensitive acoustic. If it were up to me (as if it mattered), Infernal Death would have brought a fresh breath of foul air to the final. I felt sure that the final would need it.

TOM WHITE



R O C K C O M P E T I T I O N



Sitting in Cafés were pretty inoffensive if you like that kind of thing – bland, competent pop songs which lasted

as long as a tramp's cup of tea. Next up were Sound Advice – and was the lead singer related to Tom Jones by any chance? He seemed intent on looking sexy but failed. Sound Advice should take some – chuck out your Level 42 albums, lads. Ah, sweet relief...the Desmonds. Bless your corduroy flares and naff jackets. The Desmonds' self-mocking punk/rap and silly dance routines were like a breath of fresh air after the self-conscious, sexless SA. And the judges proved that they have taste as well as a sense of humour. The

Desmonds were runners-up. Stage divers of the world unite – you have nothing to lose but your teeth... Woolly Mammoth provided the backing for manic scenes at the front of the stage. Sadly, there will always be metal bands like this. The Mammoth boys were entertaining but you've heard it all before. Metal with a prehistoric approach. Kronenbourg (left) mixed up an odd cocktail of musical styles. It was hard to pinpoint the direction they're going in, but that's no bad thing. Their lead singer reminded me of a young Suggs (of Madness) – a quirky, charismatic

frontman who kept the whole thing together. My only criticism was the length of some of their songs – perhaps a bit too long for their own good. I was disappointed by the TV Messiahs, but then I'm a hard-to-please miserable sod. The TV's jangly, short, sharp indie-pop bode well for the future, but lead singer Mark must shake off the tortured artist shackles, and stop attending the Jesus and Mary Chain school of dance. A fascinating heat – long live the rockcomp, that's what I say. Here endeth the third lesson.

STEPH McNICHOLAS

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R O C K C O M P E T I T I O N

Heat 4 R E V I E W

While the judges' votes for Heat One were being compounded, an inquisitive chap interrupted the proceedings to enquire as to our criteria for voting for the bands – did we categorize bands, or were our



selections merely arbitrary? After a moment's pause for thought, I told the enquirer that as far as my own judgement went top marks would go to the bands who made the best overall impression on the night, and that individual performances would be noted also. I was of course keeping one ear out for a good song in order to select Scene and Heard's individual prize winner. The guy seemed satisfied with my reply and left.

Heat Four was to prove nearly as tough for the judges as it was for the bands taking part. Street Legal were first on stage, a straightforward R&B combo with a white jacketed wide boy for a front man. Their first song sounded very close to The Small Faces 60s chestnut 'Whatcha Gonna Do About It', and they followed this with similar material with some nice backing vocals (60s again), all played with enough instrumental competence to justify their inclusion in the contest. If Street Legal had not sounded like just another R&B band, then they would have fared better.

The Poppyheads (left) sounded like a combination of The Byrds and The Jesus And Mary Chain. Their performance was a quite intense affair, although things did perk up slightly for one song, and one did get the feeling that there is a band of some substance lurking below the rather murky 80s indie-pop exterior.

A band far more eager to please stormed on next. Mel's Kitchen were full of vitality, and by no means low on talent. Their style, a



mixture of musical influences from the last three decades, with a touch of Housemartins quirkiness too, was entertaining and their songs infectious. Ex-Men From Uncle guitarist Andrew Lindsay played some simple neat guitar breaks, and the whole band gelled together as a unit. I had them well ahead on points when Children Of Some Tradition arrived and ripped into 'King of Stars'. Needless to say, singer

Jonathan Haynes stalked the stage area like a demented cockatoo. Sarah and Toby on bass and lead guitar respectively didn't budge an inch, as if to compensate for Jon's over-activity. They had impact, the best songs and the best singer. At this stage in the proceedings, I couldn't see any band touching them. However, I was wrong. Deja Vu brought another change of style, this time based on instrumental virtuosity. D V were all synths and power. It was difficult not to feel totally bombarded by this lot, they weighed a ton, and played just three lengthy numbers. If you are to judge this type of band by the standards they appear to have set themselves, then they are something of a disappointment. That Saxe entered the competition under the pretence that they were to offer 'different, original music'. True to say,

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R O C K C O M P E T I T I O N

the have a lot going for them, not least a most unlikely-looking jack-of-all-trades musician by the name of Sam Dowson who played percussion and cello and sang some exquisite vocals and harmonies. That Saxe kept their promise and excelled in everything they did. I have known drummer Nick Bass to let down one or two bands in his time, but he would be well advised to stick with this talented group. Lastly, then, to Bhagwan Fresh And The Gurus Of Jive

(previous page). Seven funky youngsters who rapped up the evening with a lively performance. Great fun, but the Gurus were slightly too repetitive with their chants of 'Make it funky', excellent musicians though they were. Basically, this band were victims of the heat's overall strength, from which the outstanding attributes of That Saxe and Children of Some Tradition were judged to be the strongest.

I hope we got it right!

PAUL CHRISTOPOROU

Heat 5 R E V I E W

Once again, the Corn Exchange appeared to be fuller for this heat of the Cambridge Rock Competition than it has been for supposedly more worthy occasions, and to the large crowd's delight, the judges got it right.

First on were Strike Force (below), comedy band for the night. It was probably good for them to appear first – it got them out of the way, but having said that, they weren't appalling – just hilarious!



Chopper, one of the two college bands in this heat, were band number two and were voted number two, thus earning a place in the semi-finals, despite being incredibly unlucky with broken strings and the presence of a couple of large, ugly bouncers actually parading the stage while they were playing. I always expect people to be critical of Chopper's short punk songs and general noise, but thankfully I have been pleasantly surprised, as I was on



this occasion.

Next on were House Grinder (above), who were far more tuneful. What more can I say than that they were decidedly the best band of the evening, and well deserved their first-place position. Words like 'polished', 'neat', 'professional' and 'slick' jump to my mind. It was also interesting to watch them move from an instrumental number to the drummer taking vocals, and then moving on to centre stage to play guitar. I was surprised that more people didn't have their feet tapping. Blue Lizard Rhythm, another "dance" band, were on next. They were a little more whimsical and bland than House Grinder, and yet I saw

more people dancing to them. Maybe they are slightly easier to listen to., but distinctly less interesting to watch. Axis, a reserve band who gained a place in the competition when the Bare Yogis withdrew, are a heavy rock band from the Thetford area. They actually came third and proved, for me, the highlight of the evening, with an absolutely incredible vocalist. What a voice! It was a shame that not all of the first three bands of tonight's heat could go through to the semis but I shall certainly be looking for this band in the future. Standpoint were hoping for great things this year, but although they were hot favourites before the heat

R O C K C O M P E T I T I O N

started, I must admit that they did not do themselves justice on the night. A little fuzzy all round, I'm afraid – better luck next time, if they're not too heartbroken. I also felt extremely sorry for Zak having to put up with abusive heckling and having a drink or two thrown over him – I am sure that he didn't deserve that as much as the two girls who appeared on backing vocals for one of the songs.

Last band of the night were The Mirror Brothers. Oh dear! I'm afraid that by the time I had suffered sheer boredom for a couple of minutes, they could not redeem themselves by adding a few words. It would probably be better if someone were to put them out of their misery as soon as possible!

It was an unusual heat, with no particular band having a

large following to support them, and there were a large proportion of what I would term 'dance' bands. I am impressed by all of the three placed bands, and wish House Grinder and Chopper the best of luck in their semi-finals.

SARA

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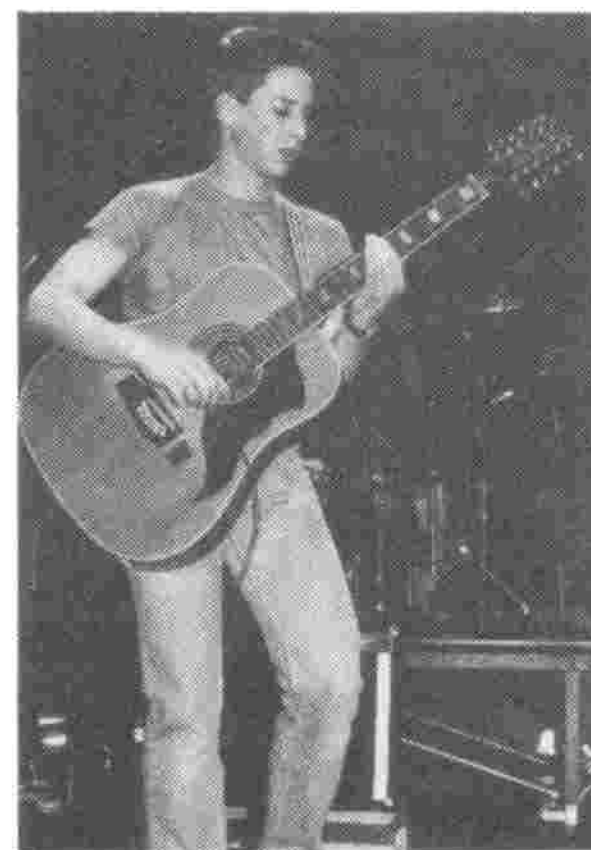
Heat 6 R E V I E W

Having missed all of the previous heats of the competition, I was looking forward to reviewing tonight's performances. By all accounts, the standard had improved on last year, and, more importantly, innovative and exciting bands like Chopper, House Grinder and The Wood (to name but three) had progressed to the finals. To my disappointment, Bible John had dropped out at the last moment, thus leaving only six bands. I was particularly looking forward to seeing Bible John, the latest offering from Andy Graves (ex-Glass Asylum), one of Cambridge's more enigmatic

musicians.

From here, things went from bad to worse when Viva took the stage. They offered undemanding middle of the road rock'n'roll, played without enthusiasm or spirit. All the reasons why rock music was in such a desperate state in the early seventies were apparent. Viva are a band without charm or imagination, and they took the audience through an almost unbearable twenty minutes. Husky Elkie Brooks-type singer Mary Cates proudly claimed that all the songs were the band's own material: she should have kept quiet about the fact that she helped write this

awful, negative music. Perhaps the fact that the majority of the audience were half their age unnerved them somewhat: I doubt whether 16 to 25-year olds represent Viva's target market. However, what makes up a typical Viva audience is too dreadful a thought to contemplate. There can be no excuses for this staid, bland performance. The Way were a bit younger, but could only offer a slight



improvement on what Viva had to offer. Commercial, lightweight 80s-style pop music, perhaps with a hint of Level 42, but plenty of twee tunes and lyrics. They commenced their set with a dull instrumental but gradually went on to demonstrate that they did have some reasonable songs in their repertoire. I was impressed by the voice of Jo Tinker, who added a certain quality to the music. They showed more enthusiasm and communicated with the audience in a way that Viva never even attempted. However, there was no getting away from their repetitiveness. They were a typical rock competition designed purely to get them into the semi-finals. The fact that they achieved their goal says little for the quality of the other bands on show that night, and even less for the credibility of the judges. Next on were In Flight (left),

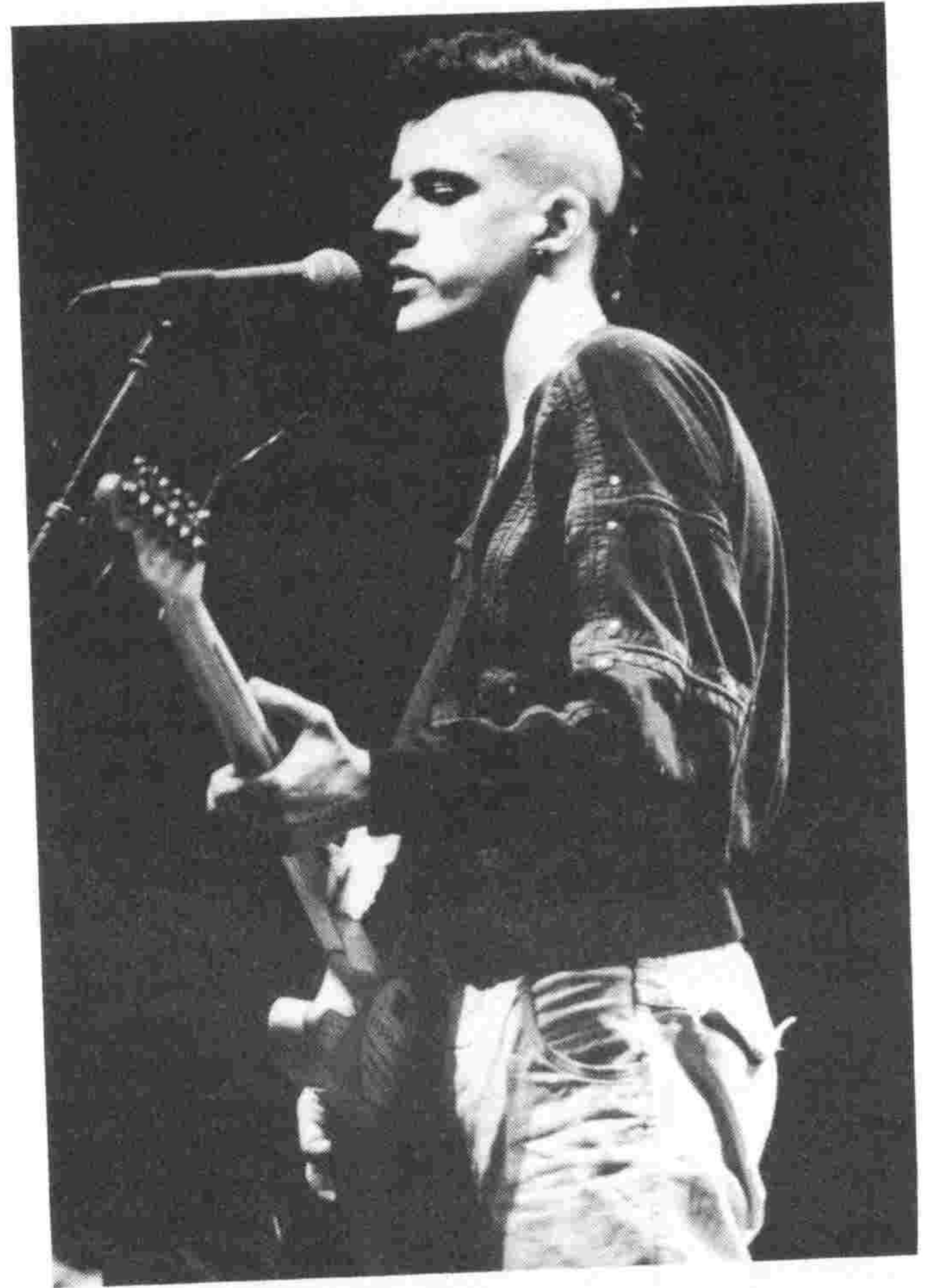
ROCK COMPETITION

a band I recall causing an upset last year by getting to the semi-finals. I also remember being rather critical of them in a review for this magazine. Since then, the band have undergone a change in personnel, but unfortunately the music has not improved. Competent musicians, though, oozing confidence, but once again the quality of their songs let them down. Their lead singer went to ludicrous lengths to explain the suggestive nature of the song titles, and I was relieved when they at last left the stage. Enough said!

The Surfin' Druids were the best known band of the heat, and easily rose above the tedium provided by the previous three bands. This was the newly-revamped Surfin' Druids, with bassist Richard Barker replacing Matt Saunter and Simon Sheldrick replacing Paul Garner on drums. Lead singer Jez cut his teeth with The Herbs, one of Cambridge's best and most popular bands of a couple of years ago. Unfortunately, The Surfin' Druids are not a patch on The Herbs: they lack both the imagination and the whimsical approach, but nevertheless, they were head and shoulders above the other bands on show. They treat sixties pop music with great respect and, as you would expect, play it well. The songs were good, especially 'Once Is Never Enough', and they received an enthusiastic response from the audience. Graham And The Mushrooms (right), like The Surfin' Druids, are indebted

to the sixties for their psychedelic thrash rock. Tonight's performance was not one of their best, but they provided a breath of fresh air with their uncompromising approach. They were not to everyone's taste, but they injected some energy into an otherwise lifeless heat, Graham's menacing vocals being complemented by some excellent guitar riffs. The Mushrooms are not simply regurgitating music of the past: they are too intelligent to do this. They aren't afraid of taking risks by experimenting with their own ideas, and I thought they deserved some reward for this reason alone. Unfortunately, their efforts went largely unacknowledged. The final band were In The Pocket, a bunch of terribly self-conscious teenagers playing tolerably competent funk-pop. They were fronted by the imposing figure of Mark Fowell, who made a name for himself at last year's competition with the highly overrated Indiscretion. But even his enthusiastic approach could not conceal the blandness of the music. I was surprised by their lack of freshness, disheartening from ones so young. Religiously following the well-trodden path created by the likes of Level 42 or Curiosity is simply inviting disaster. More effort, please!

I arrived at tonight's heat looking forward to seeing some interesting and promising new bands – and left sorely disappointed. Apart from Graham And The Mushrooms and The Surfin' Druids, the bands seemed



devoid of humour or emotion. The rock competition may have injected some much-needed publicity into our local music scene, but doubts must now be cast on its value. The placing of so much emphasis on its being 'the highlight of the year' is not helpful, and contributors to this magazine are as guilty of this misjudgment as anyone else. By its competitive nature, it is encouraging bands to play safe and stick rigidly to tried and tested for-

mulas. Already the number of truly original and exciting bands in the area is dwindling. The writing is on the wall!

PAUL ATTWOOD

Tapes



Reviewed by Chris Williams of Double Yellow Line.

Shades of...That Saxe

'The new blue sound'. What does it all mean? Do we care? Not really. But from the outset it is clear that That Saxe possess an instantly memorable sound, completed by the remarkable voice of Sam Dowson. There it is again, fluttering and wafting behind your back like an antiquated smell. One does wonder if these songs would be quite the same without her. Mark Aston, clearly aware of his vocal limitations, has opted to fill nearly all the available gaps with this extra voice, echoing and following his every word.

It seems the aim of That Saxe is to pour all the heart and soul they've got into every one of their songs. This would be no bad thing, except that all this heart and soul leaves no room for the infectious lilt which is so desperately needed. Something more in the direction of Holland-Dozier-Holland, perhaps? The nearest they get is 'Under The Sunshine Tree'. It's a tune reminiscent of dancefloor classics of earlier decades. The difference is that it runs out of life halfway through, overdosing on the old heart and soul. 'The Sunshine Tree' died before its time. Let's hope That Saxe don't..

The Children of Some Tradition

It is probably unfair that of the tapes for review only one has been listened to before now, but

it was certainly worth it. This is the first time that The Children Of Some Tradition have produced songs which threaten to tread on even vaguely commercial ground, thereby extending their appeal to those outside their immediate following.

The voice of Jon Haynes has gone from merely showing promise to being a major strength of the band. He has at last learnt to control his voice, as well as his audiences. Credit must go to the songwriter Toby Smith who is also responsible for all those background noises that you never noticed before.

As for the songs, 'Too Much Is Not Enough' deals with the nine-to-five grind. Or rather, eight-to-six as the lyrics have it. It questions the values of a system too set in its ways to see beyond the quest for money and material wealth, yes, just like Monopoly. Admittedly it's an old story, but the ideals remain apt. I don't know about 'King Of Stars', but I don't know that it is an even better song. From deceptively unostentatious beginnings, 'King Of Stars' progresses from strong to powerful. It has been carefully crafted to ensure that momentum is never lost, only increased, leaving in its wake a truly memorable and addictive tune. How do you follow that? Well they don't really.

'Deadhead' is merely listenable, though it's worth hearing live, especially if you're not a Gloria Gaynor fan. The last track, 'Last Resort', has more personality but less appeal. I'm not sure what it's

doing on this tape as it sounds distinctly out of place. Behind glimpses of the early Bunnyman, bits of The Cure, and touches of The Undertones is a group who have time and talent on their side, not just a bunch of hairdressers.

Infernal Death – Death By Fire

Perhaps if I make mercilessly derogatory remarks about Infernal Death, I'll win a place on the 'Pure Filth And Hatred' column on the sleeve of their next tape. Nice thought, but if Judas Priest can get away with 'Screaming For Vengeance' then 'Death By Fire' is fine by me. It's their humour which makes it tolerable, and they have probably got more of that than anything else.

What can I say that will compel you to throw down your copy of Scene and Heard, and dash down to your nearest Infernal Death stockist? Perhaps if you learn that it makes sumptuous headbanging fodder? Only then will you know... As you release your newly-acquired tape from its confines, avoicing any temptation to rush, you let it slip into moist, trembling hands, taking care not to disturb the unnatural elements hidden within. (You know how excitable they can get). You place it delicately inside your tape recorder and take one step back. Your brow is sweating like a hot kebab, your heart is pounding in your mouth, and as you lick your lips in trepidation, you push down the play button... It is too late to turn back, as with increasing and uncontrollable rapidity you start wobbling your head violently, directly above the stop/eject button, in case of emergency. Try it with a friend, that way you can also find out how hard someone else's head can feel on high-velocity impact. Accidentally biting your own tongue is another common complaint, but if you can draw blood in the process, you are well on the way.

Housegrinder

Well, I must say that the British interest in hip-hop and house music over the last few years has

definitely baffled me. But where do you turn in the search for music with at least some degree of excitement and novelty value in the present climate? Certainly not American shopping precincts. It sounds a little odd to hear a white person from Cambridge trying to sound like a wild and untamed black voice from the Bronx. Still, imitation has always been a crucial part of r'n'r growth over the past 35 years. Think of all those black sounds which were popularised by white faces. But what are we left with, now that the initial wave of rap has washed over Britain? An awful lot of imitators and Morris Minor and the Majors? NO, the best thing to have come out of it is the enthusiasm, generated mainly by the club scene, and even Cambridge gets a look into it.

Chris Mann must be congratulated for having written, arranged and produced a finely packaged three track 12" single. This is good work by anybody's standards. For those who take an interest in electrofunk, Housegrinder is an affable record.

The Giant Polar Bears

Behind a wall of sound (to which some may take offence) lurk the Giant Polar Bears. The lead voice of John Lindsell can only be described as 'unusual'. On first listening its monotony may err on the annoying side. On further listening, however, it begins to lend itself to the lamenting lyrics and stark guitar riffs. Some of the vocal expression is good too, especially on lines like 'All Through Your Fading Freedoms'. Much like Ian McCulloch at times. The force of the six songs rarely lets up. 'Head Goes Pop' and 'Falling Over You' are particularly noteworthy, completed by solid yet lively bass guitar and drums. It's clear that the Bears have a fair collection of songs on their hands but to experiment a little more now that they have established themselves would do no harm at all.

Live

The Pleasure Heads, Giant Polar Bears, TV Messiahs
Burleigh Arms, Cambridge

Another tuneful, messy night at the Burleigh Arms, with the TV Messiahs first to take the stage. I first saw this lot at the rock competition and to be honest they did sound a bit chaotic. Tonight was no different. There's a lot of potential within the band and their ideas are good, but need a hell of a lot more thought.

Singer Mark Dyer is a typical indie pop frontman, with a competent voice and a great interest in floors, but his timing is way off. Guitarist John Platten is well on the way with his Wedding Present riffs. As a band they need to get together (literally) and concentrate on unity.

The Giant Polar Bears. Ahh...A breath of fresh air. When they came on stage, I was a bit dubious, something to do with their clothes. But I soon changed my mind. Their set was riddled with variety. A variety of sounds. A variety of music. A variety of moods. Slow or fast. Rock or pop. You could really take your pick. From the 'Daft Not To' splendid thrash to 'Head Goes Pop', a more sedate amble. Singer John Lindsell is an inexhaustible mound of energy, as is the music, which is reminiscent of The Primitives and The Soup Dragons at times. All in all the Polar Bears enjoy their music and their audience. Surely one of the best bands around Cambridgeshire at the moment.

And so to the Pleasureheads. With the theme tune to 'Terry and June' (what's the significance?) blasting from the speakers, the Pleasureheads launched into an excellent set. 'Harvey's Cane Is Out', 'Frankly (I'm not HP)', 'Madonna Eyes'; a few tunes I completely relished. Somewhere in the middle was 'Faith', yes, that old George Michael song. A good but strange choice of covers (and no stubble). One of the singers, occasionally swapping with the drummer, looked like West Ham's winger, whereas the drummer, when singing (confusing, isn't it) treated us to a fine display of complete madness. The one song that made me smile was 'Something you're above', an excellent song which was released on vinyl, and one I haven't been able to get hold of. I hope The Pleasureheads will once again grace our Cambridge venues sometime soon.

Tonight's extravaganza made me wish my brother was ten years older. He doesn't know what he's missing.

Jordan

M.D. Corps, Wardance, As it is, The Voice, Le Tricot Rouge
The Werrina, Peterborough

As well as spots by one of MFI and two of the most sexist rappers yet to take a stage, the charity concert provided the opportunity to see sever-

al new local line-ups.

M.D. Corps had worked hard to advertise an otherwise poorly-publicised gig. They gained local press coverage, put up posters and even persuaded shops to enclose publicity with purchases, which is how I learned of the event. They told one shopkeeper that they sounded 'like Hawkwind but better'. Indeed, they had the Space Ritual sound down pat - all we needed was Stacia. Instead, all we got were two songs (which received no audience reaction whatsoever) before the MC announced that the event was already running late and they had to finish. He even had to ask them who they were: "Thankyou Walt Disney Corporation" he announced. It was several days later that it occurred to me that they might have been some relation to Mort Disney et les Hottie Bottles who have gigged sporadically in recent years. Whatever, I thought them shabbily treated.

The appearance of Wardance was much anticipated, albeit with some trepidation following the cancellation of their heavily-hyped Christmas debut concert. Since disbanding both The English Dogs and The Desecrators last autumn, Graham Butt has been putting together a group with major label aspirations. Some line-up plans fell through but there were several signs that the end result would be excitingly different: Graham, whose guitar playing has been impressively and wittily eclectic, preferred listening to a lot of classical violin, he advertised for a jazz drummer, and singer/bassist/writer Andy Frantic was advertised as co-leader. On the night Wardance comprised Graham, Andy, and Matt Keys (ex-Boysdream) on drums.

They opened with a Desecrators track 'Ban On Impurity' but the set never really took off. Because the mix distorted all bass notes to a monotonous drone, one's mind was concentrated on Graham who sang most of the material. Unfortunately, the songs seemed quite stilted, as he would pause and launch into a conventional guitar solo more typical of bands approaching speed/thrash metal from the heavy metal field than the punk one. The best lead guitarists should be like angry dogs, snapping and growling at the singer's heels, straining on and occasionally breaking their leashes; particularly with the Desecrators I thought this used to be the case with Graham. Using Andy Frantic more as singer might allow Graham to concentrate on guitar. Although he is no mean singer, the set was lifted on the few occasions Andy joined him on vocal chores, and Frantic has a proven record. Otherwise another instrument might be needed. That said, I must add that Wardance have recently acquired a production deal and seem well on their way.

So do As It Is, who have a single out any day now. They aren't a new band. As It Is is the new name for Watt The Fox; a mistake I feel. Their sound hasn't changed though: busy bass and drums under that choppy repetitive guitar sound beloved of disco-goers five or six years ago. They were the only band who inspired dancing. They were enjoyable except when they went in for long improvised packages which were almost literally monotonous.

The Voice are new on the scene, a trio comprising ex-Detours and Boysdreamers. Visually striking - especially their kilted mohican drummer - their music was firmly entrenched in 1978 punk-turns-new-wave. Each of their songs was a well-crafted three minutes. Worth a second hearing soon, I'd say.

Headliners were Le Tricot Rouge, nowadays deep into a commercial pop/stadium rock crossover groove. For the first ten minutes I was mightily impressed: I closed my eyes and thought that I could well be listening to a more well-known band. This paled, however - little of the material stayed in the memory from one song to the next. They could not hold the attention of the audience.

Admittedly they came on around midnight, but that was per schedule. During the first half of their set the audience dropped from around 200 to a hardcore of 40 who stayed on to the bitter end (most of them, like me, had booked their taxis for 1am).

Andrew Clifton

Le Tricot Rouge
The Glasshouse, Peterborough

Sunday again! 11 o'clock, better get up, take the dog for a walk, get a Sunday paper and then off down the Glasshouse for a pint or three and a spot of live music.

The Voice kick off with a loud, hard, Jam-like sound that gets rid of the Sunday morning hangover. They are soon to be taken over by the much more musically minded Le Tricot Rouge. I find the songs of Tricot much more refreshing than most of the other local bands, the lyrics are more than raving on about picking up birds and having a good time (but then again, why shouldn't they be?)

The five-piece make good music. Highly danceable, highly listenable. There aren't many groups around that play instrumentals, but Tricot take on the task with a jangling guitar, heavy bass and jazzy keyboards. The last song played in the set is a loud blast about going out of your mind (maan) and having nasty things in your shoes or something; it usually gets a Peterborough crowd enjoying themselves enough to start dancing but it was a Sunday after all and everyone was content enough to keep seated rather than exhaust themselves before a Sunday lunch.

After the show it was back home for a kip and wake up just in time for a spot of Bully on the telly.

David Foster

Pluck This
Sea Cadets Hall, Cambridge

Oh dear. It's one of those nausea-inducing gut feelings that a gig isn't destined for greatness. Surrounded by fresh-faced sheep-like sixth-formers waiting to be rounded up into a mass of arm-waving funksters by their schoolmates in the band, I have severe doubts as to the suitability of Pluck This as an opening act. My fears are confirmed. (He means Bhagwan Fresh etc. - Ed.)

Yes, those adolescent ears, softened by Astley, House, and Stock-Aitken-Waterman poundings are here to giggle when Serious Business play 'Neighbours' and sing along to Mr Buxton's plaintive melodies. Pluck This are not at all bothered.

The set is too brief. Demmy is fighting the inevitable Stump comparisons much harder these days and still wrestles the songs into a submission of excellence. Those erratic tonal qualities were never better than bouncing when off Clive Lawson's 'Devil Went Down To Georgia' scales. It's naked music and I am surprised that they used the PA - it was like seeing a photo of a sculpture. Nothing missing except the point of the whole thing - an acoustic romp in the realms of folk. I loved it.

Songs? Yes. Tunes? Yes. Slap Bass? No. So the audience chatter away about mocks and hairstyles whilst Nick Winton plinks and plinks his harp with all the enthusiasm of Chris Searle in at the deep end. Out of time, but it matters not, it has soul and identity this stuff, as well as instruments that Record Mirror journalists can't recognize.

"I'm glad you didn't clap that one, it's anti-English anyway!" squeaks a Demmy whose concern for the audience is now bereft of substance. Here we go, thanks!...

Another band to watch. Too good for funky adolescents buying 12" remixes of 'Never Gonna Give You Up' but a band to tug at the earlobes of national media people with enough ferocity to laugh off Pogues comparisons and just get pissed.

Why can't they play 'Neighbours'?

Steve Buttercase



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Generally I hate doing interviews.

I also hate not being able to do them properly because of time pressure or whatever. In this negative frame of mind I was, that January evening, to encounter That Saxe. A band who played half the London circuit before even appearing in Cambridge. How did they manage it?

Mark Aston (singer) "We didn't want to be just another Burleigh band. Nadine (Bass, manager) got us off to a good start. We had problems being a six piece, like the Rock Garden stage being so small and that, but we loved doing The Mean Fiddler."

This I had spotted! What of the label 'The new blue sound' – no Elmore James tunes? Have I missed the point?

Mark: "Saxe means blue. You probably knew that. It was just an image thing we came up with...you know, tying up the name and the sound."

The worst thing about this kind of interview is the first ten minutes. All the crap about who writes the songs and how they are only really interested in a good record deal was quickly glossed over and I began looking for personality.

What a nice surprise.

Ben: "Mark and I were in a band called Artistic Tuesday. They supported Vigil's Aunty – you like them don't you (laughs all round) but we had musical differences so we split up."

THAT SAXE



anyone can whistle

Mark: "We were too good really!"

Ben (digressing): "James, do you ever wash that shirt?"

At this point all turn their attention to James Denham and the offending article of clothing. I sneak in a question about his role, protecting his embarrassment.

James: "I play bass and cornet. It's pretty difficult because the cornet keeps falling out of my mouth. No seriously, I play both but not together."

Clive (bass, ex-This Beeno person) "I play drums, sing and play trumpet. That's even harder."

Such musical dexterity! Does this indicate a heavy influence from school music lessons?

All of That Saxe are fresh-faced and would pass as

contestants on 'Blockbusters', but does school have an influence or not?

Sam (Dowson-Cellist and vox-female): "I played with the school orchestra and I have some classical training."

Ben: "I failed grade one!"

Mark: "We can all whistle! Actually school is pretty important what with exams and all that but we're taking a year off before carrying on our educations. I expect us to have got somewhere by then."

Sounds familiar. Wasn't it Spiritwalk who said after their victory in the Rock Competition that they wouldn't be playing Cambridge a year later like Double Yellow Line? They are, of course. So how will That Saxe break the mould?

Nadine: "The music is so fresh and new and we're so good

live I think we'll get a lot of interest. We're getting on quite well with a publishing company already and we've had nice feedback from A&R men at gigs."

Mark: "We're also doing a promotional video of some songs with an independent guy at Bristol University. They've worked with people like The Blue Aeroplanes and Gaye Bikers On Acid. That should lead somewhere."

After several moments during which the Musicians' Union is discussed, the band reveal that their first cassette 'Blue' sold 29 copies, but at £3 each they made a healthy profit. Are they then closet Astleys, prepared to forsake all for the dreaded golden touch?

Mark: "I don't think so. The music's the main thing, but obviously we want money and recognition like everyone else does. That's why we're only hitting major record companies because the independents wouldn't have enough money to promote us high enough."

The arrogance of youth! By the time you read this, That Saxe will have stood trial by ordeal at the 4th Rock Competition, but whatever else they may achieve, their latest cassette 'Shades Of' is testament to a good band with enough nerve to strive for greatness.

We all pretend a bit. That Saxe are getting good at it. Perhaps one day they'll get their glory, and nobody will ever know their secret! See them soon.

Adam (drums): Me and Chris started rapping in the summer. We just recorded our own backing tracks, him on guitar and me on drums. It was completely daft rapping, it was when the Beastie Boys were really big. We used to wear Cambridge United hats, dressing gowns and wellies. Our point is that rapping is all good fun, but there were all these people in Cambridge, an English city, wandering around saying things like 'def' and other New York street slang. The idea of rap is good and we applied it to Cambridge, which is an English city in a farming region. We experimented with various bassists over the summer, but we didn't find anyone. Spazz (my brother) was a guitarist until we asked him to play bass.

Adam: I enjoyed the Beastie Boys but I didn't like this bad boy image that went with them.
Chris: We're harmless. The chorus to Desmania goes: 'We are the Desmods we are from outer space/ We're the Desmonds we're going to duff up your face/ We're the Desmonds and we bought BP shares/ We're the Desmonds and we all wear flares.' But we don't mean it.
 Apart from the flares. Are the songs about real life?
Chris: Not really, we try to avoid that as much as possible.
Adam: 'Barney's' is a love song really. It's about meeting a girl in Barney's and falling in love with her.
 'The assistants are so helpful/The

why not dress up? We enjoyed it immensely, it was great to see people looking as if they were enjoying themselves. That's what it's really all about, making people feel happy.
Spazz: We did this gig at Ciba-Geigy and we came on with paper bags over our heads. Because it was Children In Need week we tried to auction off the bags, unfortunately no-one wanted to buy them. The Desmonds have their own rehearsal room, a barn on the farm where Adam lives in the wilds south of Cambridge.
Adam: There's a generator for electricity, there's no mains. We can't drink the water from the well at the moment because it's got a bacterial infection.
Chris: That's been thought to have had an effect on us all, there really is something in the water.



The Desmonds have yet to be committed to tape although it shouldn't be long before they are.

Chris: We tried to record on a four track here, but it was a total disaster as we didn't know how to work it. We just got the drums and the other tracks contained something completely different. After that we decided that our motto is Home Recording Is Killing The Desmonds.

Adam: Funny songs tend to go out of date (perhaps they should have a sell-by date). There are a few bands you can listen to who've written funny songs and they're still funny, The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, Bad News...

Chris: ...Terence Trent D'Arby, Rick Astley.

The Desmonds write funny songs longer than the parody songs that other 'funny' groups tend to do.

Adam: Pip McCarthy is a real song, Chris wrote most of it in the morning after we'd all been drinking quite heavily. That sound really pretentious, we sound like a bunch of students. We'd been drinking Ribena and Horlicks all night.

'I went down to the Post Office the other day/ I threw my pension book away/ I went down the rec to see who was there/ it was Pip McCarthy dyeing his hair/ CHORUS Pip er ten pence.'

Adam: Pip McCarthy is a friend of ours. He bought this jacket (as seen at the competition) for me for ten pence. We wrote the song about ten pence and everything months ago and he bought it last week. 'Down on the Farm' I originally wrote as a bit of a rip-off of the Beasties' thing, but then Chris came up with a bit more of a tune to it. We're trying to work hard on harmonies, they make a lot of difference. Chris is at this moment writing a double concept album we're hoping to record, it's going to be called Thomas. It's all about a rabbit who's born with myxomatosis. It's deaf, blind and dumb and it becomes very good on Bombjacks.

Chris: Our ambition is to get the Bay City Rollers to reform so we can support them.

Spazz: Our motto is 'Flared Music Desmond People'

The Desmonds

Flared Music Desmond People

Chris (guitar): He sold his house, his car, everything, just to join this band.

Adam: We are daft. We're not a silly band like those that go in for the competition who just dress up and can't play a note. We've got quite a bit of experience behind us. The band consists of two ex-Incredible Bexley Onslaught Experience, one ex-therapy, one ex-New Swift, one ex-Don't Call Me Shirley, one ex-Geneva Convention and one is still in Geneva Convention but will hopefully have left soon, if I have anything to do with it.

Chris: I think we've practically exhausted things about farming in our songs now. We're going to try and break out into milk production or something like that.

By their own admission they're not big rap fans, so why rap?

Chris: It's just something that came along, we took the mick out of it a bit I suppose.

fashions are so fine/you can buy a suit and tie for two pound ninety-nine/that's where I first saw you between the Stapprest jeans/I thought you were the prettiest girl that I had ever seen/you strolled up to the checkout with some bargains by your side/and you said the balaclavas were the best you'd ever tried/there's bags more buzz at Barney's bargains all the time/meet you outside Barney's and I will make you mine.

Chris: We're going to make badges saying 'I've seen a Desmond' and 'My old man's a Desmond'. We want Desmond to become an alternative name for divvy or something. Somebody does something really plonkerish and you go 'What a Desmond'. That's the sort of image we're looking for.

The competition...

Chris: We were lucky because they thought it was a false entry at first.

Spazz (bass): It was a serious entry but



the SURFIN' DRUIDS

The story starts about a year and a half ago with the demise of The Herbs.

Jez (guitar, vox): I think we just lost interest in what we were doing at that time. Adam got very involved with his girlfriend and seemed less interested in the band. Me and Paul (drums) stuck together and still had loads of songs. Matt Maunder was the bass player at the start of The Surfin' Druids. He once filled in with The Herbs actually, we once did a gig as The Herbs in The Surfin' Druids format. We did the Rock competition, came third, and we were very happy with that. I think Matt eventually lost interest, he wanted to play lots of different sorts of music which didn't fit in with what I liked and eventually he was going off to college and he couldn't play at a May Ball. Richard (bass): So I did the May Ball.

Jez: Don't Call Me Shirley did a support gig with us at the Burleigh. Richard was telling me that Don't Call Me Shirley were on the rocks at the time. I said oh, we'll need a bass player soon and I really liked his bass playing and he did backing vocals which I thought was necessary. He started learning the songs off the tape and we did the gig with him, which wasn't very good at all. After the May Ball it just fell apart, we didn't do anything for a

long time. At the time I was also playing with The Blind Lemons. I'd met them at a recording studio and they said 'we've got a gig at the Marquee' and they were short of a lead guitarist so I stepped in and had to learn all the songs in a week. That's how I got to know Simon, who's the drummer with The Blind Lemons. We're still playing with them. They're probably unheard of in Cambridge, but they play down in London every now and then. We had a gig at Harlow, the Square, but Paul couldn't do it. I said we really ought to do it because the posters were up so I got Simon to do it.

Which effectively marked the departure of Paul from the band.
Simon (drums): Jez gave me a tape and I had a week and a half to learn the set.

Jez: It was one of our best gigs. At that gig we also had Philippa, Simon's girlfriend, on the fiddle and she plays on a few of the tapes we've got at the moment. We don't do a lot of those songs anymore so we're not going to put them out at all.

The line-up has remained settled at the present three piece for the last nine or ten months, which, considering the 'different line-up every gig' situation of The Herbs

and early Surfin' Druids, is quite an achievement.

Simon: I think it's pretty permanent as it is now. We all get on together.

Jez: I've never been in a band before where we've actually gone out socially in the evening and had a drink together like we do now. Before it was very much a working arrangement. Now we all write songs together. We've never been able to do that before. There's a new song every week. *So far, the band have only ever sent one tape to a record company with surprisingly encouraging results.*

Jez: Simon sent a tape off to Go! Discs and one of the ladies there was quite interested and rang me up and wanted to come over and see some gigs. We rang her up a few times and she kept making promises but nothing ever came of it. I thought they'd be prepared to travel to Cambridge at least, it's not far. I won't be desperately disappointed if we never make it big or anything. We're just happy performing. Simon: It's great fun as it is but it would be great to make a living out of it.

Richard has already tasted the record business by playing bass on the Jack The Bear album.

Do they agree that they are a sixties sounding band?

Jez: Only in the way that we write more poppy, sing-along songs, songs you can listen to once and join in on the chorus. I think a lot of that is missing from modern pop music. I really like things like The Bangles and The Housemartins because they're sing-along songs. I'm not very keen at all on synthesizer things. I like it to be human beings playing, it's more visual and it just seems more what it's about. I think a lot of bands model themselves on a particular group that they like but we don't, we just do it. Perhaps we wind up sounding like some other bands from time to time, but it's never intentional. I like a lot of folk music, I've played in a lot of folk clubs on and off lately. Everybody says I sound like Elvis Costello but I've never tried to sound like him.

Jez: The Herbs and early Surfin' Druids songs were all about boy/girl relationships. I think we've got away from that recently. We've got a song about credit, getting into trouble with credit companies. That's as close to social awareness as we get really. One of my big hates is pretentiousness, I wrote a song called 'A Man With No Name' which is about poseurs really. We've got this song called 'Saturday Night' which is about going to a pub, meeting a girl across the bar, getting pissed, her leading him on, going home, getting beaten up and ending up in hospital. It's a modern-day folk song. I'm finding I can remember songs better than I used to so they're getting longer. They used to be verse, chorus, middle eight, repeat the verse but now they're getting away from the standard sixties formula. We think about the arrangements more. I used to sit down with an acoustic guitar and write a song and that's how it would end up with the band, I would say 'Play bass and drums to that'. Now we try and think how we could make the arrangement more interesting around the song. At the moment we don't go looking for gigs, we get offered enough to keep us happy. I don't think we're particularly ambitious except in an introverted way, like writing better songs. Sooner or later we're going to start looking for a manager, we're a bit lazy about promoting ourselves. We'll keep playing until people stop coming to see us.

Steve Hartwell

standpoint



Any interview with a band that doesn't make the top three of its heat is likely to degenerate into a lot of bitching and sour grapes, but fortunately Standpoint are made of sterner stuff.

Zak (Justin, vocals): It was a shame we had to have such bad behaviour down the front. They couldn't hold on to their glasses. Usually when I can't hold on to mine it falls down not up but there we are. We hadn't played for a year (bar two gigs) and I think we did very well. The songs may have been a little fast but the mix was awful. It's hard to concentrate when you've got people throwing things on stage, I mean, what do you do? I think a lot of bands would probably have stopped. The only reason I got annoyed was because they were chucking snakebite, they know I don't drink that stuff. We spent the last two weeks arguing amongst ourselves about which song we were going to chuck because we didn't have time. It got so vicious that we decided to do them all and speed them up. The thing is, I liked all the outfits I was wearing. You were lucky, there were actually six different outfits. I like to be dramatic and colourful. I feel it's important. It's a very sensual performance and had the hassle not been there I think it might have been a lot more powerful.

Jeff (Prince, guitar): He was going to come out dressed as a nun this year.

Who were the female backing sisters?

Zak: The Blister Sisters

Andy (Northrop, bass): I think it was a one-off. As sweet as they are they're not really a permanent thing.

Jeff: Mind you, they might draw the crowds, judging

from the reaction on Thursday.

Zak: I might keep their dresses because I think their dresses were lovely.

The band have a rather troubled past due mainly to problems with drummers.

Zak: We didn't have a first one. He wasn't a drummer, he was a caterer. The second one, Clive Basic, was interested in other things anyway. He wasn't really fully committed and that's what we are looking for. We find it hard to do what we want to do with a basic drummer. If someone is just playing 4/4 all the way through the whole thing then you can't really experiment. A song like 'Breakdown' has got no chance. I think now we've found Paul (Garner) we've found someone who's capable of producing the sound that we want. We're now working as we should have been working a year ago. Since the last rock competition we haven't really achieved anything. We were spending most of our time looking for drummers and auditioning them.

Andy: Simon Bishop of DYL helped us out last summer, for a May Ball.

Jeff: We asked him to join and after ten pints of Abbot he was still saying no.

Andy: He's a competent bloke so it was no trouble for him really. We probably made more mistakes than he did in the set.

Is Paul a proper member of the group or is he simply a 'session' drummer?

Zak: He's now an official member of Standpoint.

Andy: Although he still does his other little bits. We've jammed around with some of Paul's songs but have never done any for the set. He looks upon us as the band he's in. It'd be nice to think so at least. We've got to the stage of practising in his garage anyway.

Given that Paul has another band, Geneva Convention, which acts as an outlet for his own songs and both Jeff and Zak play in other bands, will Standpoint split up?

Andy: Never.

Zak: Standpoint are like a beer is to the barrel. When it runs out it fills itself up again and tanks off. We're welded together, Standpoint will never end, members may change, some come, some go.

Andy: We've been together two-and-a-half years, which is quite a long time on the Cambridge circuit. I think we're very serious and there's a lot of commitment.

Jeff: Standpoint is like a marriage and anything on the side is like a bit on the side. If you can keep it up then

fair enough. If not it's time that you sat down and reviewed the situation. Not that we're gay or anything.

Zak: What he's trying to say is that Standpoint will never get divorced.

Jim (manager): We are a serious band and we would appreciate it if people took us seriously.

Andy: We've got to earn that.

Zak: We're planning to do a demo in the next six or eight weeks. This time we'll do something with it as opposed to keeping it to ourselves. We're going to flaunt it around. But again, as we've said before, it's the money that holds us back.

Andy: As a band we're broke and as individuals...we're broke. That's not to say that we won't be down the pub tonight for one or two because you can't let it drop.

Zak: It's time to get out on the road. I love playing live.

Andy: It's rock and roll. Just get up there and play, I think that's a good attitude, which we haven't stuck to ourselves but we'd like to.

Partly making up for the absence of Paul (who had a birthday to celebrate) was their manager, Jim.

Jeff: He used to be in the band playing bass, years back, when we were all about 15 years old, in the heavy metal stage. Jim's stuck with us through good and bad as it were and here he sits today.

Andy: He doesn't take a percentage cut or anything like that.

The songwriting is done by the band, but the lyrics are written solely by Zak. Marc Almond has clearly had a large effect on him, in the way he sings and also in the sleazy subjects his lyrics cover. The combination of Zak's vocal style and Jeff's laidback American West coast guitar is an odd combination which has only recently started to work well. So what are their influences?

Andy: Supertramp, Genesis, Gabriel. I think my biggest influence was watching Ben Ashby play bass.

Zak: Sisters of Mercy, The Mission, Dead Or Alive, Divine. Bad news are very good, they play better than half the bands in Cambridge.

Andy: They're very similar to half the bands in Cambridge.

Zak: I don't like dance music very much. I don't want to make music for people to dance to. We're into writing songs as opposed to writing pop ditties that people can move their feet, legs and groins to. The sound we've got together now is very powerful, it's strong, it's turbo cake!

Steve Hartwell

Bands

Abraxas-Cambridge 64346
Axis-Cambridge 410332
Bare Yogis-Cambridge 248481
Blind Mice-Saffron Walden 30645
Bogus Renegades-Cambridge 833232
The Brides-Peterborough 265456
Brotherhood-Histon 4253
Camera Shy-Histon 3816
Catholic Boys-Cambridge 328992
Children Of Some Tradition-Huntingdon 51161
Colonel Gomez-Ely 740900
Cri De Coeur-Cambridge 833894
Crosstalk-Cambridge 66438
Curious-Chatteris 3010
Déja Vu-Newmarket 720090
The Desmonds-Cambridge 334394
Double Yellow Line-Cambridge 352370
Fires in Arabia-Crafts Hill 80918
Flowershop-Huntingdon 57306
Fruit Bats-Fowlmere 578
Geneva Convention-Cambridge 860470
Giant Polar Bears-Ramsey 822745
Graham and the Mushrooms-St Ives 69301
Heidi and the Dobermen-Cambridge 276637
Hondo-Cambridge 315909
House Grinder-Cambridge 872348
I Thought I Told You-Haverhill 704452
In Flight-Cambridge 65048
In The Pocket-Cambridge 880034
Indiscipline-Peterborough 264156
Indiscretion-Cambridge 246195
Infernal Death-Cambridge 880377
Jack The Bear-Royston 61295
James Dean Quartet-Cambridge 322635
La Voix-Cambridge 67253
Legend-Peterborough 61854
Mel's Kitchen-Cottenham 51255
Melting Men-Histon 3450
Melting Trees-Haverhill 704203
The Moment-Ely 740244
The Mullahs-Cambridge 242972
Nutmeg-Ely 721007
On The Brink-Cambridge 263870
Paradise Street-Cambridge 244825
Playhouse-Cambridge 210384
Pleasure Heads-Peterborough 311376
Pluck This-Cambridge 64965
Poppyheads-Cambridge 351597
The Principle-Swavesey 80150
Quiet Life-Cambridge 838448
Rhythm Method-Hitchin 37587
Sardines-Cambridge 240953
Serious Business-Cambridge 357850
Session 57-Newmarket 750724
Sheik Threw a Wobbly-Cambridge 64973
Sitting In Cafés-Cambridge 313045
Sound Advice-Crafts Hill 82112
Spiritwalk-Cambridge 214852
Stand Point-Cambridge 64041
Stormed-Cambridge 65449
Strange Brew-Cambridge 243424
Street Legal-Crafts Hill 80949
Strike Force-Cambridge 246958
The Sullivans-Harlow 37048
Surfin' Druids-Cambridge 860665
That Saxe-Royston 62272
2AM-Madingley 210360
Turn To Blue-Cambridge 214861
Trux-Crafts Hill 31550
TV Messiahs-Cambridge 352089
The Wood-Cambridge 354635
Wardance-Peterborough 314703
Woolly Mammoth-Cambridge 843211
909s-Cambridge 243144

Written on

the back of

my hand

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Fuzzy-Cambridge 870651
Music Village-Cambridge 316091
NSD Sound Services-Cambridge 245047
Skysound-Cambridge 358644
Star Hire-Huntingdon 411159

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Steve Gillett-Cambridge 62560
Rosanne Holt-Cambridge 249003
Giles Hudson-Cottenham 51204

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Kite-Cambridge 313250
Lizard-Cambridge 248877
The Lodge-Claire 27811
Makka-Cambridge 66534
Minstrel Court-Cambridge 207979
The Music Room-Peterborough 46901
QualiSound-Crafts Hill 82948
The School House-Bury 810723
Skysound-Cambridge 358644
Spaceward-Stretham 600
Stable Ware-871090

Lighting hire

D. Lights-Design 944-500
Fuzzy-Cambridge 876651
Just Lites-Swavesey 50851
Softspot-Cambridge 244639
Star Hire-Huntingdon 411159

Venues

Cambridge

The Alma-64965 (Mick)
Boat Race-313445
Burleigh Arms-241996 (Reg)
Corn Exchange-357851
Man On The Moon-350610 (Stan)
Midland Tavern-311719
Sea Cadets Hall-352370 (Tim)

Huntingdon

Three Tuns-53209
Waterloo-57199

Newmarket

Rising Sun-661873 (Paul)

Peterborough

Crown-41366
Gaslight-314378
Gladstone Arms-44388
Glasshouse-64296
Norfolk Inn-62950
Oxcart-267414
Peacock-66293
Wirrina-64861

St Ives

Floods Tavern-67773 (Stan)

St Neots

Cockney Pride-Huntingdon 73551
King's Head-Huntingdon 74094

Sawston

University Arms-Cambridge 832165

Video recording

Neil Roberts-Cambridge 210320
Spaceward-Stretham 600

The Back Page

In which Scene and Heard hands over space to you, our public, to do with as you will.

In this issue some charming people attempt to persuade you to play in a huge tent to a vast audience, some other people try to sell you some large, orange PA speakers, and Steve Buttercase of The Principle rambles on quite a lot about his band and the knotty old problem of critical objectivity. Followers of the great debate upon artistic responsibility inaugurated by Plato and continued throughout the tradition of Western philosophy right up to contemporary examinations of the role of state censorship will be disappointed to learn that Mr Buttercase does little to advance the discussion. However, he does drop a few well-known local names conspicuous by their absence from more scholarly accounts. In a special and indeed unique competition, we intend to give away Mr Buttercase to the best entrant for next issue's back page. At the bottom of the page you can see a picture of local comics Wattle & Daub contemplating a rather fetching photograph of Mr Buttercase while polishing their disquisition on the relevance of the Kierkegaardian leap into faith to the Rock Competition. The Giant Polar Bears, pictured at the top, look rather more puzzled and thoughtful, but they confided to the Scene and Heard office that they are 'over the moon' with their Derridean critique of Saussure, Brian.

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From Strawberry Fair Music 44 City Road Cambridge

It's Strawberry Fair time again (well, almost...) This year Strawberry Fair will be on Midsummer Common on SATURDAY JUNE 4th, and once again we would like to let bands know through your columns that we want to know about them if they want to play. All tapes/gigsheets/info to our Music Office, address above. We would also like to hear from jazz bands, and from any Scottish or Irish ceilidh bands that might be lurking out there. Thanks! Closing date for applications will be around mid-April, and we hope to finalize a line-up by the end of April.

That was the year

1987 was a good year for The Principle and for yours truly. The heaving mish-mash of inter-band politics and media thrashings apart, there's not much I, or indeed the band, would want to change. Now and again I have caught myself thinking "that was a mistake!" but on the whole there is little to be regretted. National radio airplay, TV appearances, a single, interviews at several local radio stations including the extremely hospitable Downtown Radio in Belfast, wider gigging and offers of tour support slots are things for which I remain extremely grateful, but what about the



lessons? There were some! The ironic aspect of the whole muso thing is that you have to sacrifice your private objectivity for a public image or else face the inevitable consequences. In my other capacity as a journalist I tried to confront this anomaly with the same acid lucidity as my one-time hero, Jon Lewin. Remarks about the much-improved (dare I say good) Vigil's Aunty and certain other bands led to a reasonably sound verbal thrashing from that closed shop of incestuous (but also rather helpful) stalwarts at Radio Cambridgeshire's Rock Show. The Principle have collectively suffered since, but nothing fatal. If Stormed 'bite the bollocks' of critics who cover them, and Chris Williams won't attend the Rock Competition for fear of his opinions being disputed violently, then I must worry about the national potential of any local bands actually surviving when their delicate egos are taking a pounding. Jon Lewin, a gifted scribe,

did survive and has gone from local to national acclaim as an opinion that is fortunate enough to be expressed in public. That is, after all, what he is. When Wendy Lloyd puts together words of caustic intent on the Rock Show, of course she thinks to herself "this'll make them sit up and listen" – that is part of her function. People love to hear nasty things said about anyone but themselves – including me (and, I'm sure, Wendy). Big deal. Does it matter? The reason for this little note on the validity of criticism is to hopefully bury forever the myth that critics are either 'good blokes' or 'complete wankers', but nothing else. Where there is art, there is controversy, and the media thrive on controversy, whether it be two A&R men saying that Spiritwalk can't sing or Trevor Dann predicting the Rock Competition winners when he's judging it. It's all great – long may it continue. So I'd like to say thanks to Vigil's Aunty, Wendy Lloyd and all at the Rock show, Scene and Heard etc, for a great deal of publicity (the column's readership trebled judging by the number of letters) and a lot of fun. There were actually quite a few other bands who have thanked me for helping them in 1987 – but no-one got to hear about them. Just one thing spare a thought for the rest of The Principle. They are nice people and are too often bracketed together as sharing my self-opinionated views. They don't! Here's to the rest of 1988. STEVE BUTTERCASE

