

The Motorcycle Boy

Big Muff

80p

CLARE GROGAN

MOTORCYCLE BOY

POPGUNS

PARACHUTE MEN

PO!

PATSY CLINE

SHOP ASSISTANTS

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SPINNING JENNYS

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Welcome to Big Muff!

You can skip this page if you want, it's only the obligatory justification page.

The difference between this fanzine and most fanzines is that, not only can you actually find the interviews, but they take a prominent part. They've been hacked around a bit - some more than others.

There's a slight female predomination, but life's like that. No apologies.

Thanks to everyone whose name appears in the following pages, without whom etc. I never knew it would be so easy. Thanks to Wendy Popgun for being my cover star. I've got a Rickenbacker and I'm gonna use it, later. Thanks again to Wendy for the name. I can take a sic joke. Massive thanks to The Fat Tulips and The Spinning Jennys for the flexi.

In an attempt to explain why 'Big Muff' isn't rude, I looked in the dictionary, and it means 'large in size, spoil by lack of skill'. oo-er!
Why should I care?

There's a bit of a pre-occupation with the charts. I guess it's just because it's easy to believe that a band is so good that they can't help but be destined for bigger things, but the sad fact is that music doesn't play a large part in the music biz. All the bands in this fanzine are enjoying what they're doing, and probably like to imagine that getting in the chart is a measure of success, but at the end of the day, they couldn't give a monkeys. The same goes for this fanzine. I would like to think that everyone who reads it gets interested in all the bands, but if you don't go to a concert or buy a record, I've still had a good time doing it. Why should the answers to some dumb questions make you like the music? The bands are only in this fanzine because I like them, so go to the concert and find out why, and the only Big Muff will be in your hand!

If you have anything useful to say, you can write to Big Muff, PO Box 128, Fleet, Hants, GU13 0UA

The Motorcycle Boy

The Motorcycle Boy was formed in mid 1987 and they played five gigs with The Jesus & Mary Chain. Their first single was 'Big rock candy mountain', on Rough Trade, produced by Pat Collier, and they played a headline tour to promote it.

They then signed to Blue Guitar, the infamous Chrysalis off-shoot, recorded an album, and disappeared for 15 months.

They popped up again for a few gigs in the first half of 1989 and released two singles, still on Blue Guitar, but didn't release the album.

They've returned in 1990 with loads of gigs and another new line-up.

I spoke to singer, Alex, with additional comments from Eddie (bass), Charlie (guitar) and Anthony (drums).

Alex: Haven't I met you before? You look really familiar.

Yeah, last April.

Alex: That was the night our guitarist was really, really rude to you. Not this one. This is our new one.

He was having an 'in-depth' slagging off of My Bloody Valentine.

Anthony: Rob? In-depth? Did he have his jersey inside-out or something?!

Alex: I really like My Bloody Valentine.

Anthony: He used to be mates with them and now they really shit on him.

He looks like someone out of the Wonder Stuff with that hair.

Alex: Well that's his ambition, you've made his night. He wants to be Miles.

I'll tell him and he'll be happy for the rest of his life.

Alex: How's your hand?

I should mention that this question was aimed at the support band singer, who cut his hand during their set.

sbs: The cut's really small, but loads of blood.

Alex: Can I see it? Oh, that's hardly anything! It looked like you had a huge gash and that's really unimpressive.

sbs: That's more impressive.

Alex: Oh yeah, show them your sleeve.

I used to play tambourine and I had an enormous bruise right there.

sbs: Yeah. It's really good innit. I'm up on stage and I'm pounding shit out of my leg.

Alex: That's right. I don't care, rock n roll. Next morning you think aaaaargh!

Did the last two singles do very well?

Alex: 'Trying to be kind' did alright, but 'You and me against the world', Chrysalis only put it out to fulfil the contract. We just regard those records as basically having nothing to do with us. This is like a new band.

Are you still on Chrysalis?

Alex: Are we fuck! We had a bit of a fracas with Chrysalis over the summer.

So what happened to the album?

Alex: If we become internationally famous, they'll release it. We recorded it in the summer of '88. But by the time the album was actually finished it had been made at about 10 different times with all the tracks from various different periods and it would have sounded really, kind of, thrown together.

What label are you on now?

Alex: We're on Nymphaea Park Sensation Records. We're the first record ever on it. You know Pat Collier? It's his label. There's an EP scheduled for the 5th of March, which means it'll be out probably about 1993. It's supposed to be the 5th of March, so long as the cover's ready. It's always the cover that holds things up. It's 12 inches and it's five tracks, three songs, but there's two different versions of two of the songs. You get three whole songs and a multitude of remixes.

Who are your favourite groups of the Sixties?

Alex: Too many. Too numerous to mention. I really like the Sixties. I suppose The Byrds would come quite high. Almost anything on Motown, I like Motown. Jimi Hendrix Experience. Shangri-Las.

As everyone knows, the most important question in indie-pop is hair colour. Last time I saw you, you had long black hair. Do you change it because you think it helps the image of the band?

Alex: Well the thing is, I really have black hair, as you can see when I bend over! I don't like looking at myself with black hair particularly. It makes me look very pallid. I prefer looking at myself with white hair so that's why I do it, but sometimes it gets really fucked up by the bleach so I have to let it grow. We're not.. I don't think we're an image conscious band.

I thought you were. You said last time that you were trying for a cohesive image, and in 1987 you were all wearing your black leather jackets.

Alex: But that was just because we all had black leather jackets. I mean, everybody has one of these. We try for a cohesive image, but we're so disorganised that we never really manage. Charlie has his leather trousers.

Charlie: You can touch them if you want, the sweaty bits!

Alex: Yuck.

Your Jesus & Mary Chain trousers.

Charlie: I play guitar about as well as him.

Do you make money out of this?

Alex: Yeah, we went for an Indian meal and everything.

Charlie: Just like a real band.



Do you make a living out of this?
Alex: Seems we do, after a fashion.

Charlie: Speak for yourself.

Alex: That's right, yes. I make a living out of this - they all do it for nothing. Places like this are fairly reasonable. (Oxford Jericho Tavern).

Charlie: Yeah, it's pretty good doing places like this. These people don't do it for money, they do it for 'the love of music'.

Alex: That's right.

Charlie: And then they get to manage top bands and piss off.

Alex: That's right. They're all off to manage Ride.

Have you still got a manager?

Alex: I am our manager. Although I say so myself, I'm a damn sight better than our manager.

How important is playing live to you?

Alex: It's very important to us now because we've always been crap live, and now I think we're quite good, and so the more we can do it, the better we'll get. We've finally got a line-up we're happy with and a sound that we're happy with. I now enjoy playing live. You can probably tell from looking at us on stage, everybody's happy with what they're doing, so the more gigs we can do we'll find out what's working and what's not.

This is what we always wanted to do and Chrysalis wouldn't let us, but now we don't have to think about them. This is what we do. We own our own souls again. It's just a kind of fine tuning now.

Do you think your sound is better live or on record?

Alex: I think we've always sounded better on record, but the gap is closing.

I think we're getting quite good live. Oh no, I we're bloody marvellous.

We haven't played for months and months because we had a lot of problems.

I went to see you on January 5th, and it was cancelled.

Alex: Oh, that's right, yeah. I had laryngitis, and our bass player rang us up on the Monday before the gig and said that he was leaving, so I swore at him a lot.

We played at The New Pegasus last week. The guy rang up and said 'do you want to do a gig round the corner' and we said 'we'll do a gig anywhere'. It was a good laugh actually, it was really good.

In 1987 you had a drum machine and it kept breaking down.

Alex: It didn't break down as much as our drummer. That's not the same drummer as we have now. We don't have that any more, we have a drummer who can play the drums.

Was that the problem?

Alex: It came into it.

Do you get to see much of the places you gig at?

Alex: If it's somewhere that we think will be interesting we set off early in the day.

Eddie: Tamworth.

Alex: We liked Tamworth. I was very taken with it.

Eddie: Sherbourne.

Alex: We went to see Stonehenge.

Eddie: No, we levitated along the air lines.

Alex: Yeah, we levitated along the air lines of Stonehenge, but we were disappointed with how small it was. We thought it was going to be bigger. We tend to do 2 or 3 dates a week rather than 20 dates in a row.

Eddie: The Doors used to do that.

Alex: Well there's a fine example to follow.

What band would you most like to support?

Eddie: The Cramps.

Alex: Oh no, we'd get slaughtered. I'd like to support The Psychedelic Furs. I think we'd go down well.

Eddie: No, I'd like to support The Cramps.

Alex: That's just because you want to look at Ivy in her gold bikini. I would like to support Bruce Springsteen as well. No really, I really like him, and also you'd play to almost everybody in the world if you played with Bruce Springsteen.

Do your records do well abroad?

Alex: I don't think our records have ever been released abroad, but a lot of people seem to buy them on import because we get a lot of letters from America and Australia. Somebody in Australia sent us a case of wine for Christmas, so we were very excited by that.

Have you always wanted to be in a band?

Alex: Yes.

Eddie: Ever since I was 13, yeah.

Alex: I wanted to be in a band longer than that. I used to watch Top Of The Pops and I would practice singing into a spoon in my bedroom mirror. We're not very good at anything else.

Were you sad when Janice Long left Radio One?

Alex: Yes, I was very disappointed. I like Janice. I thought she was more sincere than any other DJ on Radio One. Most of them are pretty shallow people. I like Janice. Bring back Janice I say. John Peel never says 'have you got a boyfriend?' like Janice always did.

Alex: I like this record. What is it?

This is Electronic.

Alex: Oh, I don't like this record.

What was the last gig you went to?

Eddie: I went to one quite recently.

Alex: Honey Smugglers.

Eddie: Honey Smugglers, right.

Alex: We want to see them last week.

Eddie: I've seen someone since then.

Alex: Have you? I haven't seen anybody since then. Oh yeah, The Faith Healers. They were brilliant.

Eddie: Oh yes. Faith Healers.

I think I've seen them.

Alex: You'd know if you'd seen The Faith Healers. The girl with the really long hair, and shakes it about.

What's the nicest thing anyone said about you? The band, I mean.

Eddie: Someone once said.. oh, the band?

Alex: Not about you Eddie. Try to contain your excitement!

Eddie: Somebody said something really nice to me recently.

Alex: I don't think we want to hear it! I dunno, people are saying a lot of nice things recently, which is good. People have starting saying after gigs, things like 'you're brilliant', rather than things like 'fuck off', which is encouraging.

Update:

The Motorcycle Boy have now dropped 'Big rock candy mountain', 'Trying to be kind' and 'You and me against the world' from their set, ie the first three singles. This is because the line-up is now established well enough that they don't need to rely on their old strengths to progress to a new level of excellence.

The new single should be out by the time you read this.

The Parachute Men

If you had the choice of Thrilled Skinny at the Falcon, TV Personalities at the Rock Garden, They Might Be Giants at Powerhaus, Pale Saints at ULU, The Parachute Men at T&C 2, or an anti Poll Tax riot in Hackney, which would you go for? I went for The Parachute Men, and was mildly disappointed.

I've seen them a few times before, and I've always thought they were quite good.

But since then I've bought their album, 'The Innocents', which goes down in my books as being one of a few classic albums.

So when I found out they were doing a pre House-Of-Love-tour gig I opted for that, rather than join the queue for TMBG or the crush for Thrilled Skinny.

I arrived just as the doors opened at 9, and inside there were plates of sandwiches on the tables! By 11 O'clock all the sandwiches had gone and there's a small crowd at the bar. Some of the crowd move towards the stage; they are The Parachute Men. Halfway through the first song some more people move towards the stage; they are friends of The Parachute Men.

The first line of the first song is 'Is anybody going to listen to my story?'. That's a good question, and one which...

They played a few new songs (including one called 'new song' which presumably replaces the one they used to do called 'no. 3'), and a few singles, including, of course 'Leeds station'. Call me an old nostalgia freak, but it would have been nice if they'd played at least one song from 'The Innocents'. The band return for an encore, but leave Fiona and Steve to do the song, and the drummer and bassist join in for the fade-out (or is it the build-up?).

This serves to remind us of the time when Fiona and Steve played as a duo, between the old drummer and bassist leaving and the new ones joining. "Someone ask for 'If I could wear your jacket', because we do requests". No-one did, but they played it anyway.

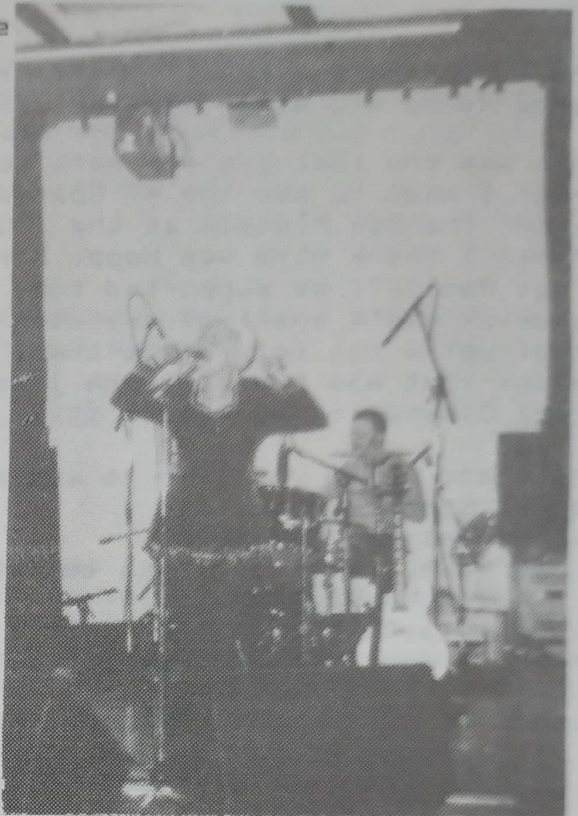
The Parachute Men give a very good live performance, but it's only a second best to their records.

The songs they release as singles are the live favourites: the album is a separate entity.

When I saw them a couple of years ago, I liked them enough to keep going to their concerts, but not enough to buy the records.

However, when I went into a record shop recently, clutching a fiver, looking for a record to buy, I came across the 'The Innocents'.

Suddenly I've discovered a new band. I hope the new album, 'Earth dogs and eggshells' is as good as 'The Innocents', because then I'll be able to go and see Thrilled Skinny.



The Pop Guns

The Poppuns are a fanzine band, and this is a fanzine, so here they are.
Wendy (vocals), Simon (guitar), Shaun (drummer), Greg (guitar), Pat (bass)

What was the last gig you went to?

Greg: I went to see the 49 Spares the other night.

Simon: The Sex Pistols at the 100 Club.

Wendy: I think mine was Happy Mondays.

Greg: Really?! We supported them in Valencia. Name-dropper. They were boring.

Wendy: I can't think of any others. Oh, Cathal Coughlan and Fatima Mansions.

Greg: Let's not talk about that.

Wendy: That was the last one I went to though.

Greg: Disappointing wasn't it?

What band would you like to support?

Wendy: Stone Roses.

Simon: Belinda Carlisle.

Greg: Yeah, well. I'd like to support her actually. But I think I'd have... no, I won't say that!

Simon: Playtex got there first.

Wendy: I don't think they did actually.

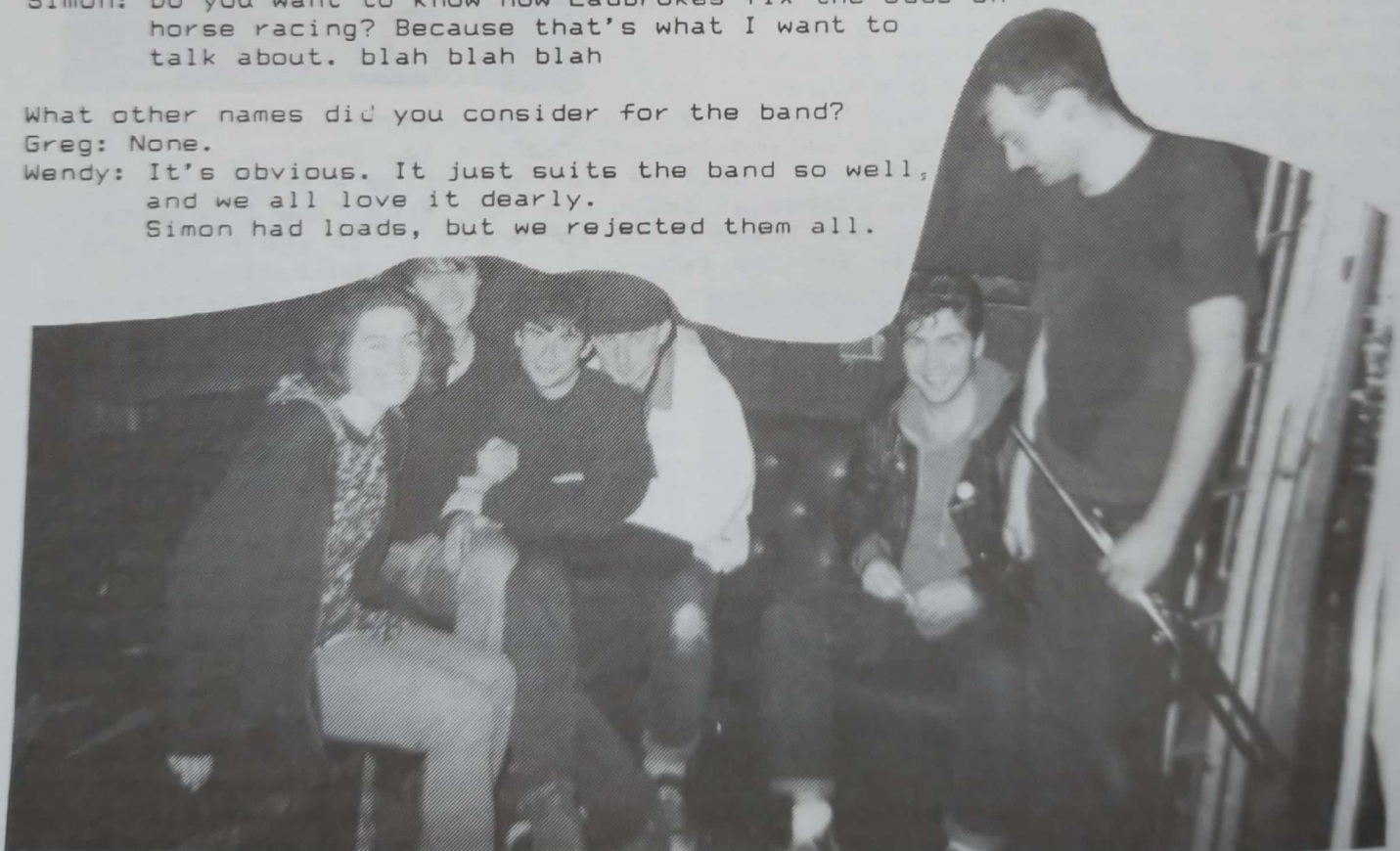
Simon: Do you want to know how Ladbrokes fix the odds on horse racing? Because that's what I want to talk about. blah blah blah

What other names did you consider for the band?

Greg: None.

Wendy: It's obvious. It just suits the band so well, and we all love it dearly.

Simon had loads, but we rejected them all.



One of these people is not in The Poppuns

Greg: Next question. Who would you most like to get into a snog situation with?
Come on Wendy.

Wendy: That's a good Smash Hits question. Paul McGann. Actor. I'd really like to be in Smash Hits and they'd ask if I'd ever been sick in my slippers.

Why?
Wendy: It's one of their favourite questions.

What else would they ask you?

Wendy: Who'd you most like to be in a snog-up situation with?

Greg: Would you like some free E?

Wendy: No, I don't think they'd ask that. They ask you what did you have for breakfast.

What did you have for breakfast?

Wendy: A Mars bar.

How would you describe yourself?

Greg: Available. You're not very good at interviews are you? Come on. What's your favourite sweets? Where do you want them? Wendy?

Wendy: What was the question?

How would you describe yourself?

Wendy: What, as a person?

I meant the group, but you can answer it either way.

Greg: Available, available.

Wendy: Cute and sexy.

Greg: Sexiest band in pop. Second sexiest band in pop.

Ask about the Poll Tax for Christ sake. Ask us something relevant. Are you going to pay your Poll Tax? Is anyone going to pay their Poll Tax?

What's the next big thing? Not paying your Poll Tax. Don't pay your Poll Tax. This is Poppuns decree. Don't pay your Poll Tax. Mess 'em about if you want, just don't pay it. Did you hear about Ride?

What about them?

Greg: We're doing an anti Poll Tax compilation album and Ride were asked to do it and they said no, they wouldn't touch anything political. Scum. What is less political than the Poll Tax. Kick them were it hurts.

You don't like Ride then?

Greg: I don't mind Ride, but I don't like people who say the Poll Tax is a political issue because it's not. It's life.

Who else is on the album?

Greg: Lush are doing 'Chirpy chirpy cheep cheep', The Wedding Present are doing 'Come up and see me'. We did 'Bye bye baby', Bay City Rollers, as you heard tonight, roughly. In fact Amelia helped us out.

The theme of the album is 70s cover versions.

What's the most embarrassing thing that's happened to you on stage?

Wendy: Tonight I forgot to turn my guitar up, and I was trying to do my bit on one of the songs and it wasn't coming out and I didn't understand why, and I realised about halfway through that I'd forgotten to turn the guitar up. That's pretty embarrassing. And I'm forever forgetting the words of the first line. I had to ask Shaun and Simon and they wouldn't. There was a guy in the crowd who knew them all. I should have asked him.

Have you got any plans to release an album?

Wendy: Well, yeah. We're contracted for it, so we've got to do it, but we want to obviously. As soon as we get the songs together we'll go and do it.

Are you going to get some new songs, or the ones you do now?

Wendy: Hopefully mostly new ones. I think maybe this next single will be on it. We might re-record one of the old things we feel we can do better. Depends on our songwriting contingency and how fast they go.

What was the last record you bought?

Wendy: 'Loaded' Primal Scream. I think it's fab. And I bought 'Elephant Stone' at the same time, and that's quite good.

Do you follow the Top 40?

Wendy: Yes. It's a tradition, I always remember when I was younger I would sit and listen to the radio and Mum would say it's dinner time and you would stop listening to the radio but you wanted to listen because you wanted to wait for your favourite track so you could record it. I was in the middle of my dinner and something would come on and I would rush out and record it and Mum would shout at me. I'm a really avid chart watcher and listener. I watch Top Of The Pops and Going Live and the Chart Show and all those things.

Do you like them because of the bands on them?

Wendy: No, I'm just interested. I just like watching it. I don't like it for the music, I usually hate it. It's quite good fun because you can be really nasty and shout at the telly. I just really like having chart music around. It's all horrible but I really like it. I love listening to the Top 40. I'm a chart addict. That's why I laugh so much.

You'd like to get in the charts then?

Wendy: Yeah, it'd be really good.

Greg: Well there you go. Sex, E, and don't pay your Poll Tax, and you're away.

STOP THE POLL TAX

In April, the Council will be sending out the first bills for the Government's Poll Tax, hoping people will pay...

■ Why do people hate this tax so much?

It's unfair: every adult will be expected to pay the same level of Poll Tax, so people living in overcrowded, previously low-rated homes will suffer most, especially in inner-city areas like Haringey where the Council has been forced to levy a high Poll Tax to maintain services. Rates for small businesses will rocket and working class people, particularly ethnic minorities will be generally worse off whilst the rich will benefit greatly.

It's extortionate: at around £573 locally (with only a maximum 80% rebate for people receiving benefits) who can afford it? Central government is deliberately starving Councils of desperately needed funds for local services, making us foot the bill.

It's intrusive: all adults are expected to register where they live, and when they move and Poll Tax officers have been given unlimited access to sources of information on residents. The Government is moving towards introducing compulsory ID cards and the threat of a police state is closer.

Ruth From Po!

Po! released an album last year called 'Little Stones' on Rutland Records. The Bull & Gate was the venue for a rare opportunity to witness the Po! live experience in March this year, and a lot of people came to share it. The first band on was The Valerie Singleton Experience, aka The Popinjays, aka three girls and a drum machine. They played a tight set in which those who made it to the front had the chance to wiggle to 35 minutes of pure pop. Next came The Ammonites, a band with the energy and enthusiasm of hamsters on nitrous-oxide! Shame The Sundays stole their potential album cover. The pinnacle of the evening was of course Po!'s set. They've got two guys in blacks vests and jogging kecks on guitar and drums, and Mary and Ruth on bass and vocals respectively.

I spoke to Ruth, the voice behind both Po! and Rutland Records.

Was tonight better than other gigs you've done?

Yes, it was better, but I suppose the anticipation is there. If you get on a bus and travel down from Leicester to anywhere, be it London or Hull or Scunthorpe then it's an adventure anyway.

What groups have you got on Rutland? And have you got any records coming out?

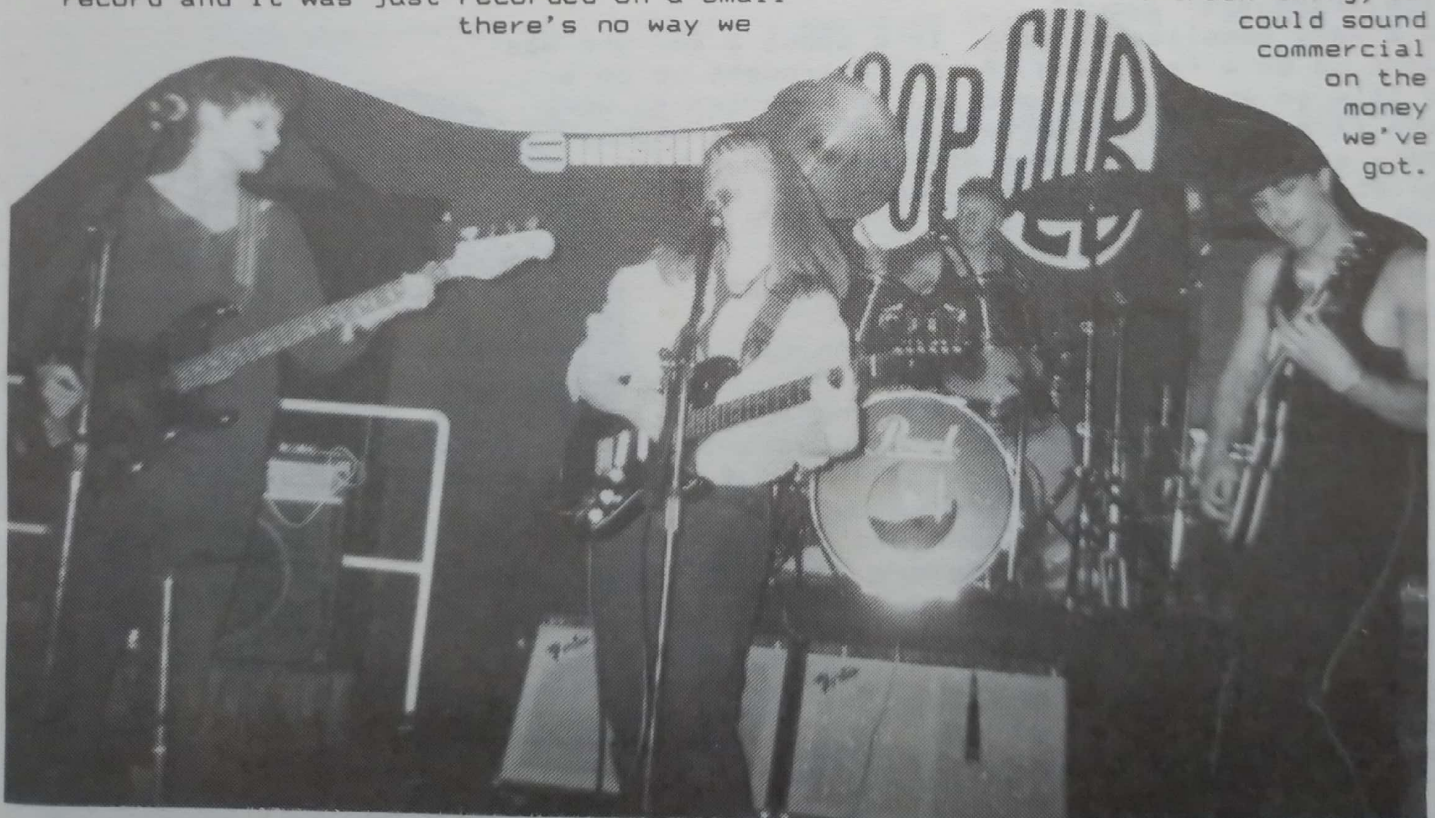
No, cos we've got no money. Po!, The Ammonites and The Waiting List. That's it at the moment. We have a lot of plans for the future. If we had some money, I'd love to put records out, but...

Are you trying to have commercial success?

I don't want to lose money because I have no money to lose. So far we've lost money. We just put out what we think is good and if people like it then that's really good. So far we've had a small amount of very encouraging response. So there's not a huge number of people who are aware of us, but the people who are aware of us seem to like what we do. Depends what you mean by commercial. We're not going to sound like Stock, Aitken and Waterman, I wouldn't imagine, but we don't have the technology to sound commercial. The LP cost us £30 to record and it was just recorded on a small

there's no way we

4-track thing, so
could sound
commercial
on the
money
we've
got.



Are the lyrics very important?

Yes. The main reason for being in a band for me is to be able to communicate with people about my experiences and my beliefs and at the moment I think music is a good way to do that. I might equally have decided that writing a novel might have been a good way to do that, but I chose music.

All the pictures I've seen of Po! are just of you, rather than the whole band.
That's because when Po! started we had a sort of stable line-up, and then the bass player left because his girlfriend was pregnant, or something, and ever since then we've had line-up changes that have come and gone. At the time we had the T-shirt done it was at a point where you couldn't say this is the stable line-up of the band. But hopefully now we've stabilised it. I'm not a complete egomaniac. But The Smiths, people saw Morrissey as being The Smiths, but he would be nothing on his own. He could do a nice interview or something on his own, and he'd look quite nice on his own, but the whole band was what it was about, and I suppose it's the same. We're 4 different people, but because I write the lyrics and that's what the band is about, I'm more often the person who talks.

Are you an optimist or a pessimist?

Alternately one then the other. One day I'm an optimist, the next day I'm a pessimist.

Are things going right generally?

With the world? No, but being an optimist doesn't mean things are going right at the moment, it means... I think things are going to get a lot worse.

Is there a north/south divide?

Yes, but it's more of a continuum, it gets gradually more divided the further you go. But you can't just assume everyone living in the south is rich. There are some very poor people living in the south, and in a way it's worse for them because they see all the rich people, particularly rural communities. Like when I was at school I lived in Somerset and there was a family, a girl at my school, and she literally lived in a tin shack. She lived in a house made of corrugated iron, they were just so poor, and it's very difficult to explain that to people living in tower blocks and things like that. It's a different sort of poverty.

What's 'Farmyard' about?

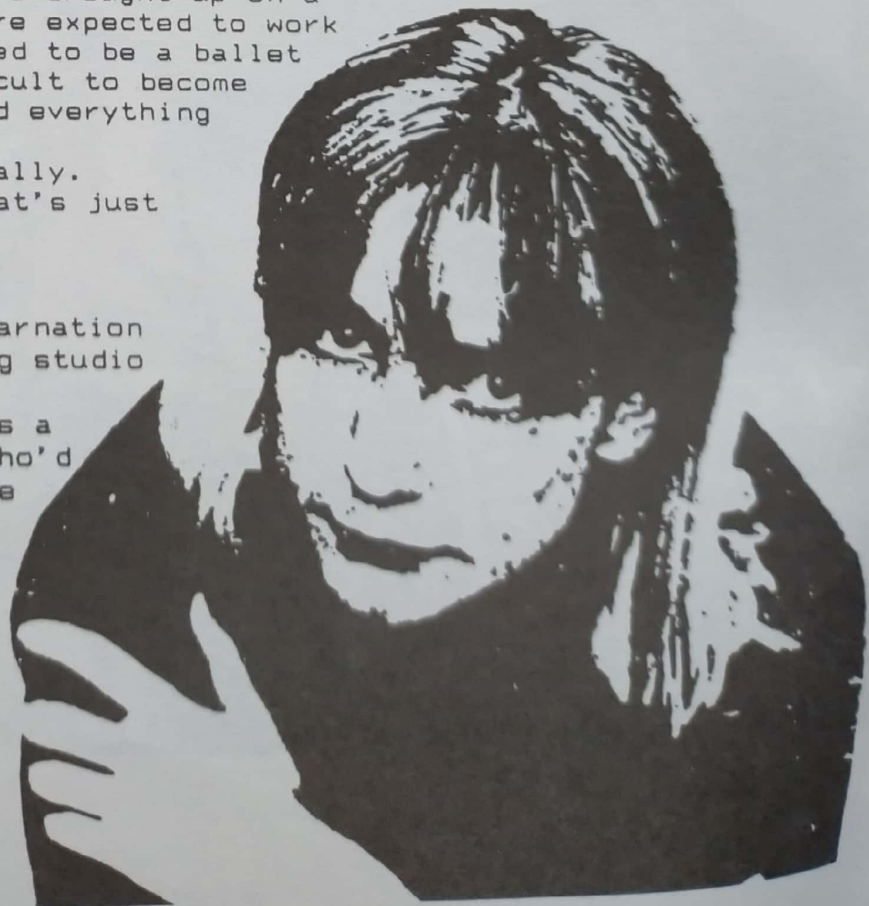
It's a very complicated song. It's about a boy who was brought up on a farm, and if you're brought up on a farm it's in your blood, and you're expected to work on the farm, but he actually wanted to be a ballet dancer, and it's very, very difficult to become a ballet dancer if your family and everything expect you to be a farmhand.

So it's about shattered dreams really.
We're not really a noise band, that's just a token noisy song.

What's 'Lying on my side' about?

It was written after a former incarnation of Po! ventured into the recording studio for the first time.

At that recording studio there was a well-experienced sound engineer who'd recorded lots of good bands before he worked with us! And so used up all our money playing us tapes of all the good bands that he'd recorded. And I think we managed to do one song in all that time. He shall remain nameless, and it was not Pete Aitken!



THE AMMONITES



Rough Guide To Camden

There's a bit of space here, so I thought I would do this, since I always seem to end up in Camden.

Falcon - The best venue in London. Always packed. Only good bands play there.

Palace - If you want to see the band don't bother turning up until midnight. If you want a dance and a snog, get there at 10.

Dingwalls - Crap really. Bloody expensive beer. Lots of ultra-violet light.

Town & Country Club - Banned any 'disruptive' bands, so nothing inspirational there. Would make a good leisure complex, or supermarket.

Bull & Gate - If you can find a seat you're probably in the girlies bog. Plenty of space though.

Electric Ballroom - Do bands still play there?

Camden Workers Social Club - Not very often.

Powerhaus - Not really in Camden, but worth a mention. Quirks include a crude form of air-conditioning, scampy-in-a-basket, and the tunnel which takes you from the back bar right up to the front of the stage.

Camden Market - Not really a venue, but you can get some good tapes there.

Shop Assistants

In late 1984, David Keegan, Stephen Pastel, Aggi, and 'two other people who you won't know of' made a record called 'Something to do', and played at least one gig in Edinburgh under the name Buba & The Shop Assistants. In March 1985 the Shop Assistants started, and the rest is history.

After an exhaustive tour of Britain at the end of 1986 and a tour of Europe in the first half of 1987, The Shop Assistants were rumoured to have split up, and then rumoured to be making a comeback. They returned to play a couple of gigs in Edinburgh in December last year and a mini tour of 5 dates in Britain in January this year. I caught up with them at London Powerhaus on 26th January 1990.

The current line-up is David (guitar), Sarah (singer, previously on bass), Laura (bassist, previously on drums) and Margarita (drummer, on loan from The Desperadoes: "I'm just a session musician").

How come it's taken you so long to make your comeback?

David: It's not really a comeback.

Laura: I don't think it's really a comeback. We were just getting really disillusioned and really fed up. We just decided to get on with our lives again.

Sarah: We kind of tried for a while, but I don't think our hearts were in it, and we just left it, and then after a couple of months we just decided to do it again, and that's culminated in this.



You were going to play a couple of gigs in Edinburgh in '88.

David: We weren't.

You were going to play Fife Aid in July '88. It was advertised in NME.

David: Really? I didn't know that. No-one told us about that. I don't remember it at all. I remember we were asked to play the one in 1987.

Sarah: Oh, Fife Aid! Oh yeah. Well we just decided not to. I can't remember why. Laura, why didn't we play Fife Aid? I think it wasn't very well organised.

Laura: I don't know, I can't even remember it. I vaguely remember supposed to be playing it at one point, but then we couldn't for some reason or other.

In February '88 you were going to play Edinburgh Assembly Rooms.

David: Well, no-one asked us about it until the night before you see. I was up in Aviemore, and no-one told me about it until the night before.

Sarah: There was the thing at the Assembly Rooms which we couldn't play because Laura was doing jury duty, but I can't remember why we didn't play Fife Aid. We don't remember. It could have been anything. I don't think it's very important anyway.

David: See this band? The Desperadoes. They should have been playing tonight. Why didn't they?

Sarah: Because they weren't allowed, the promoter wouldn't let them.

David: Bastard fucking promoter wouldn't let them.

Andrew: We blew The Shop Assistants off stage in Leicester!

Do you still live in Edinburgh?

Laura: David goes up North, he's a ski instructor in Aviemore. Sarah and I are in Edinburgh all the time, together.

Sarah: I was at College before and now I've gone to University.

Laura: I'm at in second year at College. I started it last year, but I started from the beginning.

Doesn't this interfere with that at all?

Laura: Well, it hasn't done until now! This is the first time it has.

Who are your favourite groups of the Sixties?

Laura: Beatles.

Sarah: Beatles. Shangri-Las.

Laura: Shangri-Las. Bob Dylan, but he's not really a group.

Sarah: Velvet Underground.

Laura: Velvet Underground.

Sarah: The usual stuff. Patsy Cline.

David: The Rolling Stones. The Beatles. Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band are the best.

Would you describe the Shop Assistants as original?

David: No. I think we are now, but we didn't used to be. We were based on other things, such as The TV Personalites, and the Ramones. We used to be, but now I think we're ourselves.

Sarah: I suppose it's original in as much as we're doing it and nobody else is doing it.

Laura: It's got it bases in other things, I suppose it's inspired by other things.

Sarah: Obviously things have been taken from other things. But the way we do it I don't think anybody else does it. You might say we're similar to

The Darling Buds, but I don't really count them because they copied us.

Laura: It's difficult to be objective for you talking about something you know yourself.

Sarah: In a sense you can never do anything new because everything's been done.

Laura: You can just hope to do it in a different way.

It's too much for me to think about!

David: Did you like us tonight, by the way?

Yes. The last song of the main set was really good. (Big E Power)

Laura: That's my favourite song.

Sarah: That's probably going to be the next single.

David: Are you going to hitch up to Manchester to see us tomorrow? It'll be the last chance to ever see us.

So you're just doing this little tour, and that's going to be it for now?

David: For now, yes. It's a hobby.

Sarah: We've got enough recorded for another single.

Have you recorded enough for an album?

David: Well actually yes. We've recorded enough for an album, but it's not being released.

Sarah: We're releasing it all as singles.

David: We might do it all as an LP for Europe or something like that. Wait 'til you hear our next single, it'll be really good.

I haven't bought this single yet.

David: You see the trouble is you really have to buy two to get everything. The 12inch has got 4 songs, and the 7inch has got a free flexi disc with 'You trip me up' and 'The other one' on it. If you can get the box set it's got a little photocopy thing.

Laura: I haven't even seen this box set.

David: It's got a photo, it's got a free flexi disc, and it's got a little photocopied thing that I done.

Laura: Has it got a badge?

David: It's got the words. It's got a badge.

Laura: What does the badge say?

David: I don't know. It's the same as the sleeve.

Is it going to get in the indie chart?

David: We've been disqualified from the Gallup chart.

Laura: Because it's got a flexi disc. You're not allowed a flexi disc.

You won't get disqualified from the indie will you?

Laura: I don't know. I hope not. We always get disqualified or thrown out.

Fran: You won't get disqualified from the Spanish indie chart. They had a flexi at number one.

Have you been in the top 100 before?

Laura: We were... Sarah, were we 96 with 'I don't wanna be friends with you'?

Sarah: Oh no, we got to something like 67. There we are, pop tarts, eh!

As good as that!

Sarah: You cheeky bastard!

Do you pay a lot of attention to what's written about you in the music papers?

Sarah: We read it, and I collect it for my scrap book for when I'm old, but we just kind of shrug it off really. It doesn't really mean an awful lot.

The NME was quite complimentary about your new single.

Sarah: No they weren't.

Laura: It was quite a good review. Melody Maker slagged it off. Dave Jennings gave us a really nice little, sort of interview. It was really nice. He said really good things about us, but in the same edition we had a really bad single review.

Who writes the songs now? Do you all write them?

Laura: Sort of. We take turns. David usually comes up with some of it.

Sarah: And then we sort of muck it about.

Laura: And the three of us work on it and bash it about, and see what comes out of it.

What was the last record you bought?

David: 'Freak scene'. It's the best record ever released in the entire world.

Do you like the rest of their stuff?

David: No, not really. Well, I like them. I think they're really nice and good people, but their LPs don't quite hit it. I've seen them live, but I don't think they were at their best when I saw them. It was the end of their tour and they were doing Pixies songs and stuff. But you know something? They all go skiing as well, not in Aviemore, but Jay goes skiing, he's a keen skier. That's a world exclusive for you cos I don't think anyone's ever printed that. Skiing is the best buzz you can get, apart from 'Freak scene'. You've got to cruise, and you've got to imagine a really good record like 'Pretty vacant' or a Marychain record or something like that in your head.

Loop is the same kind of thing.

David: I like Loop. I don't really know them. I mean, basically I've been a hermit for the past three years and all I've heard of Loop is the 53rd & 3rd compilation we're on with them. I think our song's really good on that.

That was going to be a single wasn't it?

David: Well, Rough Trade didn't like it, so we thought 'well fuck them'.

(a Billy Preston record comes on outside)

Angus: I've never heard this outside my bedroom in my life.

David: The Desperadoes are all soul freaks. Billy Preston and Syreeta.

Did Syreeta ever do anything herself? What the fuck is Syreeta?

The Legend!: I've got a double album of Billy Preston.

David: I think I'll go and dance as well.

The Fizzbombs

The Fizzbombs are Angus (guitarist of Desperadoes, drummer of Fizzbombs), Margarita (drummer of Desperadoes and Shop Assistants, singer and guitarist of Fizzbombs) and Sarah (singer of Shop Assistants, bassist of Fizzbombs). They released the excellent 'Surfin winter' EP in 1988, following the tradition of Edinburgh bands to write songs about surfing.

They played a disastrous tour to promote the EP, in which the equipment broke down most nights.

There was one good night though, when they supported The Jesus & Mary Chain at Glasgow Barrowlands, and they played the best ever and went down well.

There has been nothing from The Fizzbombs since 1988, so while The Desperadoes were hanging around I asked Angus about The Fizzbombs.

I saw you at the Boardwalk in Manchester in April 1988.

Who with? The Groove Farm? Can't remember what that was like.

What happened to the Fizzbombs? Are they still going?

We might be doing something, and then again, we might not. We've still got a few songs we wrote, and we think they're quite good songs so they might suddenly reappear, and then again, they might not.

Who would The Fizzbombs be now?

It would be a totally studio concept. An 8 piece band. No. I couldn't say, honestly. We've got some ideas, but...

Well, I'm glad I asked!

the Fat Tulips

The Fat Tulips recorded their first demos on 26th June 1987, and used one of the songs 'You opened up my eyes' on a flexi with Two Pint Take Home! fanzine - the best fanzine in the world, coincidentally written by The Fat Tulips. Things went a bit quiet for a while, and they played their first gig in Huntingdon in March 1989, which included a brilliant version of 'Music Man'. They recorded 10000 Demos during 1989, and released their debut single on Heaven Records in July 1989; the rhetorical 'Where's Clare Grogan now?', which is answered in these very pages.

The new single 'Four songs for Simon' is out now, and well worth buying. Send £2 to Heaven Records, 110 Bridle Road, Burton Joyce, Nottingham, NG14 5FP That includes p&p plus a free postcard, fanzine and sticker. (£2.50 overseas) All the above also applies when you buy the first single.

'A girl called suicide' was recorded in October 1989, and is published by Leaves Music 1990.

Two Pint Take Home! is still the best ever fanzine, and is now in issue Four. Issue Three came with an excellent compilation tape featuring all the bands I would like to have in this fanzine, but could only get some of.

The address of Two Pint Take Home! is
12 Chatsworth Place, Longthorpe, Peterborough, Cambs, PE3 6NP

The Spinning Jennys

The Spinning Jennys have supported The Field Mice, 14 Iced Bears, Groove Farm, Bob, New Fast Automatic Daffodils and have written the fanzines 'Belly Eyes', 'What we did in our summer holidays', and most recently, 'Manic Pop Thrill'. Their songs are very sombre, as you can tell from the titles: 'Train song preservation society', 'Burning of the midnight doberman', 'Custard creams', 'The chopper with the platinum handlebars' to name a few. They have dropped a lot of the old songs and are now faster and funkier. 'Splendid' was one of four tracks recorded on 8th and 9th of March 1990. The Spinning Jennys can be contacted via
Matthew, The Gallery, The Street, S.Lopham, Nr Diss, Norfolk, IP22 2LH.

Patsy Cline

I was directed towards Patsy Cline because of her influence on Maria McKee, and so I went to look for a record by her. Undaunted by the fact that she was filed under 'country', I searched through the multitude of 'Best of' records and picked one called 'Golden Greats'. After the initial embarrassment of people thinking I was listening to Radio 2, I got to quite like the record. In the search for more information about this minor goddess, I came across a video called 'The Real Patsy Cline' (Prism Leisure Corporation), and it turns out that Patsy Cline was a legend in her own shoesize. The story goes something like this.

Patsy started singing in her home town of Winchester, Virginia, and in September 1954 she signed a 16 record deal with the independant label, Four Star Records. The terms were not at all favourable, but Patsy was in no position to call the shots.

Patsy was able to exploit the rise of the television era to get her first big hit in 1957 - 'Walkin' after midnight'.

Because of the sub-standard songs forced on her by Four Star, she toured the US extensively, to ever-dwindling audiences, whilst waiting out the contract.

At the end of 1960 she signed to Decca and was free to record any song she chose. The first record was 'I fall to pieces', and it was her second hit.

But just as her career was taking off again, tragedy struck. In March 1961 Patsy was involved in a car crash in which she came very closed to death, but was saved by a visit from Jesus, who told her 'No, not now. I have other things for you to do'. She returned to the stage of The Grand Ole Opry in Nashville in a wheelchair, and relieved the fears that she may never sing again.

While she was still recovering, she heard Willie Nelson's 'Crazy' on a juke box and went to record it immediately, but after spending a whole afternoon on it, her producer, Owen Bradley, made her stop. Two weeks later she recorded it in one take. It is now the most popular juke-box record of all time in the USA. After the grinding touring season of '61 and '62, she was rewarded by winning awards across the board in 1962, and playing to sold-out audiences coast to coast in 1963.

On Sunday March 3rd 1963 she gave one of her best ever performances, in a benefit show for a Kansas DJ who was killed in a car accident.

The next day, when they set off to fly home to Nashville, Loretta Lynn expressed her worry about travelling in the bad weather. Patsy replied 'when it's my time to go, it's my time.'. On 5th March 1963, the plane crashed near Camden, Tennessee, 90 miles from Nashville. All aboard were killed, including Patsy, and her manager, Randy Hughes.

In her time, Patsy was doing for female singers what Elvis was doing for white R'n'B. To quote Sylvia, whoever she might be, 'she set a precedence - a female singer does not necessarily have to be an opening act for some male act'; and to quote Roy Drusky, one of her backing musicians, 'she had the charisma, she had the magnitude that went with it, that very few have'.

Patsy once said 'if you can't do it with feeling, don't'. That's a bit of a cliché now, but when Patsy Cline said it, she meant it.

Patsy Cline fought against the established traditions to pave the way for today's accepted norm, but died before she made films and got fat.

Clare Grogan



When I read that Clare Grogan's new band, Universal Love School were playing Kings College London on Thursday March 15th, I conned my way into the building on the pretence of being a student there, only to find that there were not enough students willing to shell out £3.50 in aid of Amnesty for a Guinness, Baileys and Irish Whiskey promotion with ULS, One and Eddie Izzard to make it worthwhile, so it was cancelled.

I know students are apathetic, but are they completely stupid?

Luckily Universal Love School were also playing a free gig in the ULU bar the next night, so I went along to that.

A healthy number of people turned up, and it was a very good gig.

The first song was 'Can U fly' which is a good catchy song to start with, but has some rather corny lyrics like 'tell me baby I'm the only one'!

Most of the songs are a compromise between being catchy and being corny, but then, that's what pop is all about.

There have been some problems 'translating the record thing into a live thing' and it is difficult to judge the songs live when they are probably better suited to record, but they certainly stand up on their own.

When I listen to the songs, 'Reason is the slave' strikes me as being their strongest song, but the songs I found swimming around my head in the following weeks were 'Can U fly' and 'Dreamkissing', so it depends on how you define a good song as to which I best.

They also did a cover of Sly & The Family Stone's 'Running away'. I haven't heard the original, but I would guess that it is a better version!

There was a long call for an encore, and they came back and did 'Girl Friday' again. A song about weekends.

The guitarist 'introduced' the band at regular intervals during the set, so I asked him, who is in the band?

The guy playing the keyboards is the keyboard player, his name is Ricky Blue, the guy playing the bass is Dave Heath, the guy playing drums is Paul Ridgeley and the girl singing is Jack Robinson, and I'm Steven Larottie.

Who's the other singer?!

Some dodgy bird. She also doubles on tambourine.

I was allowed 10 minutes to interview the dodgy bird. 'This is Friday night for me as well'.

Have you done many dates?

This is probably about our 11th since November. We've just been playing one or two dates.

Have they been going well?

Yeah, really well. It's just really hard for us at this stage because we do realise some people are out there expecting some Altered Images songs, and it's difficult when you're just playing all new songs. I appreciate how hard it is for the audience almost, to get into that because they're just hearing brand new things all the time.

We're still into writing ultimate pop songs, I guess. I don't think they have to be boring. I never have.

How would you categorise your music?

What we're trying to do is just groovy rock n roll, I guess.

Are you trying to get in the charts and have commercial success?

I don't have a record deal at the moment, so we're a bit away from that. Obviously to get across to more and more people we need to have one. It would be silly to not want one.

Are you playing any bigger places?

No, it's just small gigs at the moment and build it up. Wednesday night we supported Love and Money, which was the biggest thing we've done, and that was really good. But we're just really starting from nowhere, which is slow, for me, but we need to do it again. Just strip it down to basics.

And start again?

Yeah. It has to be like that. It's not going to work any other way. You can't change the public. You've got to do it the way they like to see it being done and that's build on it, and it's the public at the end of the day.

You did an album, 'Trash mad'. What happened to that?

It was recorded and put up in the shelf somewhere in London Records' offices.

Was it songs you did tonight?

There is a couple of songs in there from 'Trash mad' but that's it.

Were you happy with it?

There was absolutely nothing wrong with it. Obviously London Records just really lost confidence in what I was trying to do. Which made me realise I was going to have to go really public with it.

You had a good reaction.

Yeah, I was pleasantly surprised.

Are you pleased that other bands do cover versions of Altered Images songs?

Do they? I don't know. It's nice if they do. That's a phase in my life that was dead exciting to be 19 and all over the world. That was amazing, but...

That's behind you now?

A wee bit. It's not that I intentionally disassociated myself with that phase of my life, but it has become very, very remote to me. I don't really know why that is, but it has. It was a long time ago and I really am a different person in many ways, just because I've grown up a lot, like most people.

Have you heard The Fat Tulips single, 'Where's Clare Grogan now?'?

Yeah, I've heard of that. You can't help being flattered by these things.

They wrote in to the NME as well.

That's right, I remember.

Would you go on children's TV to promote your records?

Childrens television? Why wouldn't I? Why are you asking that question?

Because a lot of bands don't because they think it upsets their credibility.

Shit. What is credibility? Who can afford it? I think it's silly not to try and get across to as many people as possible. It's just snobbishness not to.

I think lots of people handle it in different ways. You could go on in a rarra skirt and carry a bunch of balloons, but I wouldn't do that. What's wrong with kids? What's the big deal? There are no rules. There are absolutely no rules.

You can do whatever the fuck you like.

Kids just listen to whatever's on the TV and they like it.

And you do, and I do. What makes us a superior knowledge? Because journalists in the NME tell us, or journalists that write fanzines? Hell, there's no way.

As I say, it's the way you handle things.

Do you still live in Scotland?

No. I love Scotland and I go back as often as I can, but I don't get to work up there the way I get to work down here. At the end of the day I'm just trying to make a living, like a lot of people.

Where do you work?

Well, at the moment I'm working for British Satellite Broadcasting. I do their movie program for them. Looking at movies. That's nice, as someone said to me.

They had a lot of problems to start with.

It's like anything new. It just always takes time. If somebody offered you an awful lot of money to sit and watch really good movies and talk about them afterwards you'd find it hard to resist.

Do you agree that 'Money changes everything'?

Yes. People are greedy. That changes people. Money gives you a certain amount of freedom to do what you want to do in life, which makes it nice to have. But it should never cloud your vision, but unfortunately I think it does cloud people's vision. I'm probably no different, but at least I think about it now and again.

What was the last record you bought?

I just bought the other week, I don't know if you're heard of Julee Cruise. She's done a really good album. That's great, I love that. And I bought Primal Scream 'Loaded'. Bobby used to be really good friends with Altered Images. I know him pretty well. I don't know him very well now.

What star sign are you?

Pisces.

Are you a typical Pisces?

Very typical.

What is a typical Pisces?

Scatty, romantic, sensitive - hyper-sensitive. If you write anything bad about me I'll cry. That's guaranteed. It's up to you.

The theme of this band seems to be love. Is that deliberate?

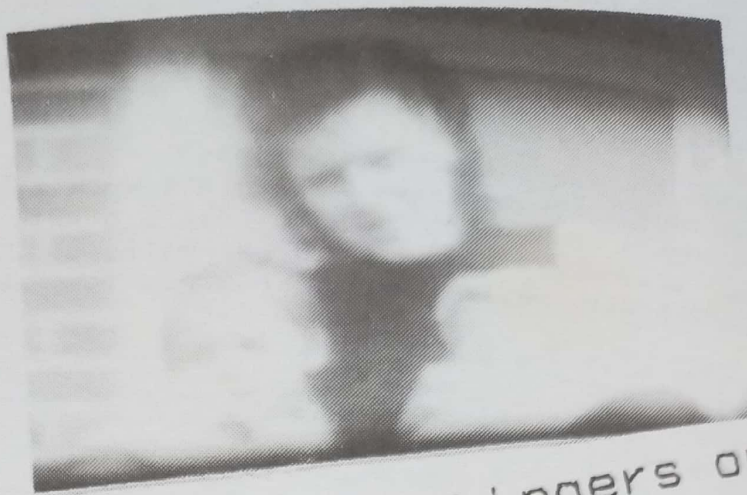
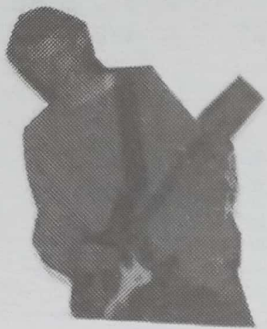
It's such a universal thing. I think it's one thing that we can all relate to. I think it's quite important for me really to write about things that I'm not out of my depth in. I think that's one thing that we all know what it's like to love, to hate, to be rejected, to win the fight, you know. That's what the whole world is all about. What else is there? I don't know. I just think it's quite important to keep relevant to your own life. I give away quite a lot of personal things in my lyrics, and if I didn't write the songs that I do, they wouldn't be honest. I know love isn't the most original idea, but it's certainly the most misunderstood and understood.

Clare is having a tough time waiting for the inevitable mega-bucks record deal, playing college gigs to a small number of people who would rather be at home reading a book on Chebyshev polynomials, but have come out in the hope of hearing 'Happy birthday'.

Although the band look as if they are enjoying themselves on stage, I don't think they would be there if they didn't have to be.

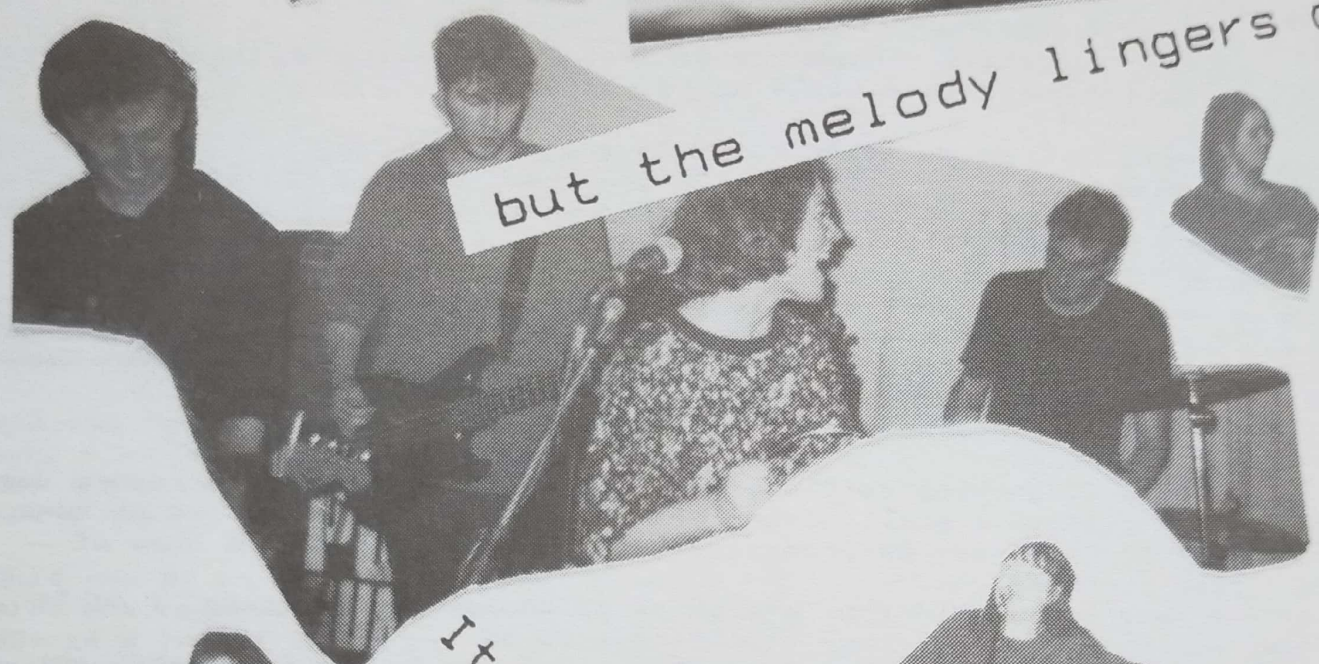
So remember when you see Universal Love School on Top Of The Pops, they got there the way you wanted them to: the hard way.





The song's ended,

but the melody lingers on.



It's not lies,



it's just bullshit.

