

HOUND DAWG

MAGAZINE

"I'M A HOUND DAWG!"

NO. 5 MARCH 2010



CAPTAIN BEEFHEART

DRUMMER ROBERT WILLIAMS LOOKS BACK ON HIS TIME WITH THE ECCENTRIC DON VAN VLIET

STEVE BERRY

THE ACCLAIMED U.S. AUTHOR ON HIS NEW NOVEL THE PARIS VENDETTA



TREES

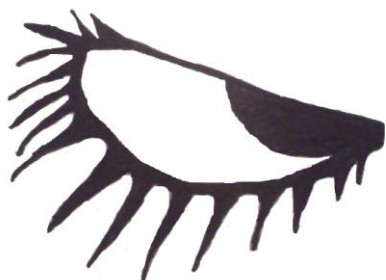
CELIA DRUMMOND AND THE ENGLISH FOLK BAND THAT REALLY DESERVE A LISTEN, JUST ASK GNARLS BARKLEY



POETRY - HUMOUR - INTERVIEWS - SHORT FICTION - REVIEWS - AND MORE

The theme of issue five was well thought out before the material was gathered. I thought it would be an interesting idea to explore some groups that I liked to hear as a kid and since got into on a bigger scale. These bands have not become house hold names and it is quite baffling why this is the case. The first group are TREES, a 1970s folk group that released two great albums and then disbanded. Their records have recently been reissued on CD and their influence seems to be spreading a little more now. And the second band is ELEPHANTS MEMORY, the band who provided the freak out music for John Schlesinger's Midnight Cowboy and backed John Lennon during the early 70s on his Sometime in New York City LP. The stories of these two bands have not been so well documented on the internet or in the media for that matter and I feel happy to have run two great stories on these superb bands. Philippa Cole also got to interview the huge selling American writer Steve Berry, master of the modern thriller with books like Amber Room and his new novel, The Paris Vendetta. On top of the writing he also runs the History Matters foundation, a trust that funds the restoration of historical artefacts and buildings. There is also a cool interview with Captain Beefheart drummer Robert Williams and other bits and bobs. I hope you enjoy the fifth issue of Hound Dawg Magazine. I loved gathering the material for this one and feel very happy with the results of the articles. Thanks readers. And whoever sent me that death threat...great gag. Didn't scare me one bit.

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WISDOM TWINS BOOKS WT 007

INSIDE HOUND DAWG

NO.5 MARCH 2010

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CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Wade, Philippa Cole, Robert Williams, Steve Berry,
Chris Foxon, Gary Von Scycoc, Jake Hart, Michal Shapiro,
Celia Drummond

LADY GAGA

MANCHESTER

18th of February 2010

By Chris Foxon

Walking towards the Manchester Evening News Arena on a cold February evening doesn't usually provide you with the amount of tiny dresses, spandex and flesh on show. There were hundreds of lightning bolts painted on faces and a multitude of blonde wigs on heads, and I haven't even begun to mention what the girls were wearing. A sight like this can only really mean one thing: Lady Gaga has come to town, and she has brought one hell of a show with her.

During a long wait to get in, we are informed that the most unique human being on the planet today is still rehearsing, sound checking and no doubt adding a few last minute extras to the show. The doors opened an hour late, and an extra half an hour before we were allowed into the arena proper. This was rectified by the 2 support acts who managed to get their sets over and done with extra quick, yet still managing to warm up the crowd for what they really came to see. A special nod should be given to Alphabeat and their quirky, catchy and fun-filled mini-set, I must remember to check these guys out at a proper show.

A little bit more waiting after the support acts gets the crowd a little anxious, the feeling we have been waiting all night is at its max now. After what seemed like 100 Michael Jackson hits over the PA, the lights finally go out to ear destroying screams. A small intro with a timer counting down is projected onto the curtain that wraps the stage, as the counter reaches zero, the music starts and the curtain is raised. The stage looks like a comic book version of the west side story, at the top of a syringed-decorated flight of stairs stands the silhouette of Miss Gaga herself. The deafening screams are soon drowned out by the song she performed days ago at the Brits, Dance In The Dark, followed by a cheeky hint at a new song, Glitter and Grease. In the centre of the stage



lies a big green Rolls Royce, and housed inside its bonnet is a keyboard which is utilised for the first of the "big hits", Just Dance. Gaga now has the entire arena in the palm of her hand!

With song after song, the excitement grows bigger and bigger. Elaborate costume changes, often mid-song, have Gaga kitted out in sequinned leotards, steam punk inspired dresses and hair, and even a see-through nun's outfit, during the second act. We were taken from the city onto the subway, complete with a train's carriage prop, where Gaga had the arena jumping to Love Game and a song she dedicated to the gay males in the crowd, Boys Boys Boys. Gaga made her way onto a platform far in front of the stage and the curtain dropped for another set alteration, as she entertained the crowd informing us that her and her group of dancers and musicians have come from New York City, via the subway and are looking for the Monster Ball.

Arguably the most atmospheric part of the show follows, when the curtain is raised and we are greeted by Gaga's now trademark, grand piano. Before she plays she explains that they played a different show in the United States, but she got very bored and threw it away, and you really get a sense of the kind of person that Lady Gaga is, She lives for this!! As she blasts her way through heart-filled renditions of Brown Eyes and Speechless, a song she wrote about her father "about how he loves Johnny Walker just a little bit more than



he loves me", a massive fire engulfs the piano and huge mushroom flames rise from the top of it, in perfect time to the music.

After another brief interlude, Gaga emerges, once again in another elaborate costume that she is now famous for, and is raised over 20ft into the air on the platform in front of the stage. It is after a few more tunes and a few more costume changes that we are led into the forest,

and the song many people came to see is played. The crowd once again erupt for a massive sing along of Poker Face. The curtain drops And the 3rd act in this spectacle comes to an end. The crowd waits. Even though Lady Gaga's show has over ran by almost an hour, and it's getting late, these fans, these "little monsters" aren't going anywhere. It is time for an encore that puts most people's entire shows to shame. Filling the stage is a humungous, animatronic octopus style monster with massive teeth that creepily dances in the centre of the stage as Gaga makes her way through a pitch-perfect Paparazzi, before being devoured by said monster. The curtain drops, and the crowd begin to sing, they know what's next. The entire arena, unprompted, breaks into the annoyingly catchy chorus of Bad Romance. As the curtain is raised one last time, Lady Gaga gives the fans what they want, and performs the song of the night, Bad Romance.

Leaving the arena, I felt absolutely blown away and completely satisfied. I know I sound awfully biased, but I feel I should tell you that the last gig I went to was the brutal Heavy Metal heavyweights, Fear Factory. I am not a fan of mainstream pop music, but tonight, Lady Gaga put on one of the best shows I have seen in my entire life. This was just the start of Gaga's first Arena world tour, this show will only get better. It may be too early to call, but this could very well be the best gig you will see all year, possibly the best gig you will see until the Pop sensation, who is still only 23, comes back and we get to do it all over again.

10/10



TREES

Trees existed briefly between 1969 and 1972, an English folk outfit who perfectly combined the soft female voice oh so prominent in their genre, the atmospheric acoustic guitar playing and the occasional heavy electric rock out session just to throw you off. The band never really gained financially from their music at the time but recently their music has had something of a revival, with the reissues of their two excellent albums, *On the Shore* and *The Garden of Jane Delawney*. With the theme of this issue, delving into past groups who not only caught my attention but have not had the true credit they deserved, I bring the story of Trees to the readers of Hound Dawg Magazine. Their singer, Celia Drummond, formerly Celia Humphris, talked me through her view of the band.

Words by Chris Wade

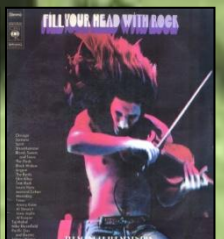
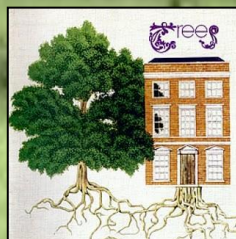
What year did you join Trees?

1969, my sister Sue worked at Philips Records at the time as did David Costa (founder and guitarist of Trees). He asked her if she could sing as he'd formed a folk band and needed a female singer. She said no, but her sister had a nice voice...

What was the band going for sound wise? Many compared you guys to Fairport Convention?

A fair comparison. We were influenced by just about everything we heard in the very early days, and our 'sound' gradually evolved during the first recording sessions, which started before the gigs. It was pretty much defined by the various abilities and playing preferences of the individual members - everyone liked to play lead all at the same time, including the drummer.

The two albums *Garden of Jane Delawney* and *On the Shore* were both released in 1970



weren't they? Were they made quite close together?

Released in 1970? Can't actually remember but very likely. JD was recorded in 1969 and released early 1970, On the Shore was recorded in spring / early summer, I think. No particular reason to be so close, except that we were ready.

Did you have much commercial success at the time, or a large live following?

No to the first in terms of actual album sales or being paid, although we were fortunate enough to appear on BBC radio several times and TV too. I think it's correct to say we did have a large live following and were certainly on the main concert hall and festival circuit.

Why did the band split?

I think it was probably our lack of financial success that caused us to stop being so productive, and gradually bits of us fell away until only Barry Clarke who played lead guitar and I were left. We recruited replacement members and played on for some time but again financial problems caused the final break.

What did the band members go on to do, including yourself?

Barry and David Costa formed Casablanca and made 2 albums. Bias wrote the hit song Music in Me and joined the Kiki Dee Band, and in more recent years toured extensively with the Moody Blues. Unwin Brown, the drummer, played with Capricorn who were big in Japan before becoming a teacher at a private school in Kensington, London. Sadly, he left this world 2 years ago, he's greatly missed.

What did I do? I became a housewife and mother, and went back to my roots – acting, dancing etc. I still do voice overs, although I gave up teaching dance some time ago. I now sell luxury houses in the St Tropez area and live coincidentally only a couple of miles from Barry. France is a big place - what's the likelihood of that?! Neither of us were aware the other was there...

The last couple of years has seen a kind of Trees revival of interest. Gnarl Barkley sampled you

and a few people have covered Garden of Jane Delawney. Why do you think people have started to have more of an interest in the group?

No idea. It's wonderful! Although the interest in Trees has never lessened (there have been several re-releases of our 2 albums and even some bootleg live sessions over the years) it's true that Gnarl Barkley were responsible for the high level of this recent renewal of interest. We thank him, it's been a marvellous ride; Sony emailed me and asked that we allow the sampling of our track 'Geordie' to appear on the GB album. It was due to be the title track and was therefore rather important to them.

I turned it over to David who has remained in the business, albeit on the artistic side, and he negotiated some very advantageous provisos for us, namely the tracking down and being paid the past publishing royalties we'd never received, providing the original recording tracks (those that still existed) so that we could remix them, the re-recording of certain parts and re-release of both albums, and best of all organizing a reunion for us at the Chelsea Arts Club.

It was the first time we'd been together, all 5 of us, for 35 years. And the years just fell away...

Will there ever be any chance of a reunion gig?

A reunion gig was planned at the Borderline Club in London, and rehearsals started, but Unwin became ill and it didn't happen.

What have you been up to lately and what's next for you?

I moved to France 5 years ago. I was lucky enough to play the lead in Noel Coward's Private Lives on a small tour in the Riviera but as usual there wasn't enough money to go around so I went into the real estate business. Of course, that's suffered somewhat due to difficulties in other countries, but property here is still much sought after by those that can afford it so we're hanging in there. No idea what's next, but whatever it is, I'm looking forward to it!

The Garden of Jane Delawney and On the Shore can be purchased from the Amazon website

INTERVIEW:

ROBERT WILLIAMS

WILLIAMS IS ONE OF THOSE INTERESTING MEN OF MUSIC WHO SEEMS TO HAVE DONE IT ALL. PERHAPS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS TIME IN AVANT GARDE ROCK GROUP CAPTAIN BEEFHEART, LEAD BY THE STRANGE AND ECCENTRIC DON VAN VLIET, HERE HE ANSWERS SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS VARIED CAREER ON THE OLD SKINS. FOR YOUR INTEREST I DIDNT WANT TO EDIT THIS INTERVIEW, EVEN IF AT POINTS IT MAY LOOK UGLY TO SOME, BUT I WANTED TO KEEP MR WILLIAMS' VIEWS IN, AS THIS IS AN HONEST MAGAZINE. MY VIEWS ARE NOT REFLECTED HERE

Interview by Chris Wade

When did you first get into playing drums? Who influenced you?

At age 5 I got a snare drum and a little cymbal and an inflated Desinex promo from the local drug store they gave me as a tom tom. I leaned the tubular inflated promo against my snare and played along with records I liked by Wilson Pickett and Percy Sledge and The Tijuana Brass. A neighbourhood friend of mine told me that for 50 cents they gave drum lessons on Saturdays for the Girl's Drill team where the boy drummers would line up and play while the girls did their flag waving, rifle spinning and saber slashing. I played in Drum and bugle corps until age 14 when I bought a drum set. Since then I have played for several bands including my own. Influences on my drumming came from listening to Charlie Watts, John Bonham, Mitch Mitchell, Art Tripp, and Billy Cobham.

How did you meet Don Van and end up playing in Captain Beefheart?



I met Don Van Vliet for the first time in Philadelphia where I attended boarding school. After graduating high school I met up with Don in Boston, where I grew up and ended up working as a roadie for him in 1973. At the end of that run I auditioned for Dr. John and although I didn't get THAT audition, Beefheart, who was there to see the audition, told me that if he ever needed a drummer he would hire me. In 1977 he kept his promise.

What kind of experience was it being in this band, as Captain Beefheart is one of the most notorious groups in music history?

There were good times and there were bad times. He never paid very much and I was constantly on the edge of poverty. Touring with Don was the most fun.

Doc at the Radar Station is a great album. Getting into drums then playing stuff so odd like this, and older Beefheart stuff for tours, was it hard to adapt your style to fit this style?

I never found playing his parts to be difficult, however learning parts off Trout Mask was difficult because it was hard to hear the drum parts clearly. Learning his new stuff was just down to figuring out parts from tapes and vocalized drum parts. Remembering all the parts was the challenge.

I am always gonna mention Hugh Cornwell if someone has worked with him because I am a big fan. You were still in Beefheart while recording Nosferatu with Hugh Cornwell, one of my favourite albums. How did you meet Hugh and get into making the album?

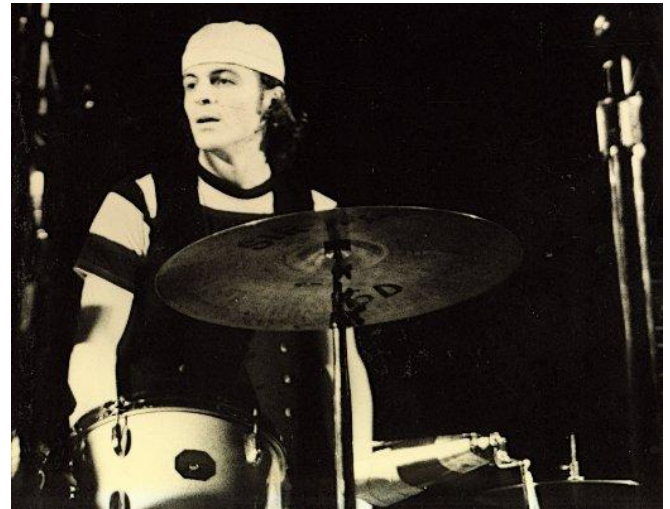
I met Hugh in San Francisco while touring with Beefheart. After Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller) was completed, Hugh offered to have me record a duo record with him (although he now refers to it as his first solo record) and we started the record in late 1978 in Los Angeles.

Didn't Don Van feel unsure about you making this album with Hugh at first, before you arranged a meeting or a dinner to ease his feelings? Is this true?

No that's not true. I had time off and could do as I pleased during that time. Don hated the idea of me working with Hugh because he thought I'd reveal some of his musical secrets to him. Don was very protective of his method of making music.

You worked with Hugh again on his Wired album and toured with him and Caroline Campbell for a 2007 UK tour. Do you enjoy working with him?

No, not at all and I shall never work with him again. He's an egomaniac with a chip on his shoulder. Because Chris Bell, his regular drummer, had a wife expecting a baby, Chris was unavailable for the gigs booked on the following UK tour starting in late August. David, through Hugh's direction asked me to fill in for him. I agreed to do it and three weeks before leaving for England took another three weeks off to further prepare enough to avoid any potential trouble. Before leaving, I called Steve Lawrence (Hugh's former bassist) to ask him about Hugh's temperament these days and he told me to always be on time and not to make mistakes musically and things would go smoothly. I was never late for anything including meetings in the Hotel lobby, rehearsal, sound checks, nor any time he asked me to be available. I was always



there at least five minutes early. You can never tell him he's wrong or he'll make your life hell. I would have left the tour for how he treated me but after the position he put me in financially I had no choice but to roll with the punches until I got the money he owed me at the end of the 2007 UK tour. I, to this day can't figure out why he invited me over to play if he had it out for me so much. Maybe it was to torture me with his sick little mind. During the UK tour he was constantly insulting me and humiliating me in front of people and let's just say he's lucky I didn't teach him a lesson. What pisses me off most is him telling his audience that Nosferatu is his first solo record. I played more instruments on Nosferatu than he did and co wrote and co produced it with him. In Scotland I mentioned to him that there was a part in Mothra that wasn't played as it was recorded on the record and he gave me a bollocking in front of everyone. That was probably the closest I came to quitting the tour. But I sucked it up. I wasn't calling him out with my comment about Mothra, I was just bringing it to his attention. He was determined to make my life miserable and every time he saw me happy he felt the need to wipe that smile off my face. Beefheart was known to be cruel at times but he's an eccentric and it comes with the territory and all the band members suffered from his abuse from time to time, but compared to Hugh, Beefheart was an angel. When I think back on my time with Beefheart a smile comes to my face but when I think back on my experiences with Hugh I

want to buy a bazooka. I played all the songs correctly so he started criticizing my tempos because he couldn't find a legitimate reason to hound me otherwise. I suggested that he count off the songs in question and even after that in mid song he'd scream at me on stage in front of the crowd to either speed up or slow down. I told him before hand, ..."once you count it off that's it. I have no desire to speed up or slow down within a song, it makes me look bad."

I even lied to him by saying, "Beefheart is pleased to know that I'm working with you these days." Beefheart hated the idea. I tried and tried to win Hugh over, even after him being so insanely cruel to me but nothing worked. Maybe now you can get a glimpse of what I went through and why I'm so bitter. To end this rant I must say that I'm sad to know how mean and egotistical he is. He's his own worst enemy and it's a shame we didn't connect. Otherwise, it might have been nice to record a follow up to Nosferatu but his reluctance to collaborate with the right people leaves him putting out horrible, sappy, uninspired material. Nosferatu is a duo project. It even says so on the cover. For him to claim it as his first solo record not only robs me of the credit I had worked so very hard for but makes him look like an idiot to those that have the ability to read English text. He's scheduled to play Los Angeles in late March and I'm on the fence as to whether or not I will meet him when he gets here. I am struggling with the notion of forgiveness. We shall see how I intend to put closure to this unfinished business but he sorely deserves good spanking. We'll see... One thing is for sure, Ain't gonna work for Mr. Cornwell no more!

Back to Captain Beefheart. Why did you leave Beefheart in the end?

I left Beefheart because after recording my first solo record on A&M Records, they wanted to do a follow up album and the two schedules conflicted. There was much more money to be made with A&M and I was tired of living in poverty while employed by Don. Besides, I was



under contract with A&M and obligated to give them another record called Late One Night.

When was the last time you saw Don Van?

January 31st, 1981 at The Golden Bear in Huntington Beach, California. It was the last show Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band played live.

Do you think you'll ever see him again?

It's doubtful. He's very sick with MS and doesn't want anyone to see him in that condition.

What are the most precious and proud musical moments you have had?

Getting a record contract with A&M Records and touring with Captain Beefheart. One night after rehearsal Don took me up to Frank Zappa's house. We got there at midnight and didn't leave until 9 am in the morning. It was just Don, Frank and me.

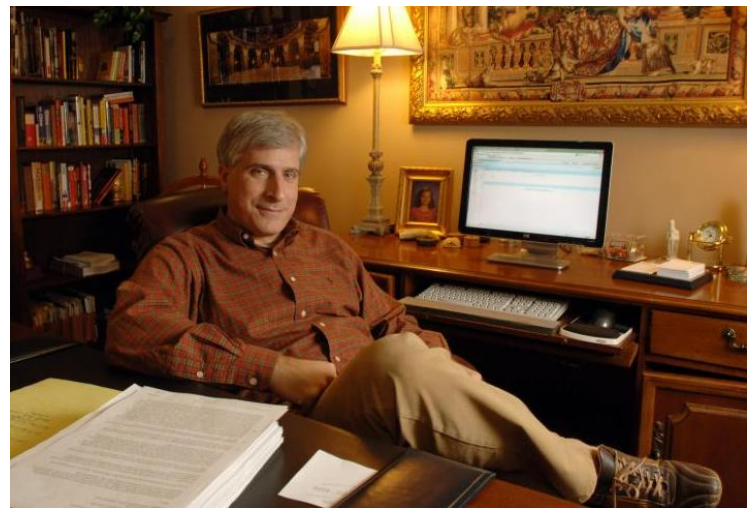
What are you doing now? You're still playing aren't you?

I am still playing drums as well as guitar, keyboards, bass, harmonica and singing on my solo compositions. I'm nearly finished with my latest solo project and looking for a record company to release it commercially. Some of my new material can be heard at:

www.myspace.com/therobertwilliamsbanned

STEVE BERRY

PHILIPPA COLE CHATS TO THE WORLD REKNOWNED AMERICAN AUTHOR, WHOSE BOOKS INCLUDE THE AMBER ROOM AND THE THIRD SECRET. HIS TWISTY THRILLERS ARE ON SALE IN OVER 50 COUNTRIES AND WHEN HE'S NOT WRITING, HE IS RUNNING THE HISTORY MATTERS FOUNDATION WITH HIS WIFE. HIS ROAD TO PUBLISHING TOOK OVER 12 YEARS AND 85 REJECTIONS, BUT BERRY PROVES THAT DETERMINATION WILL PAY OFF IN THE END.



You have a new book coming out, *The Paris Vendetta*. Would you like to tell me a little about this book?

This is Cotton Malone's fifth adventure. It picks up where the *Charlemagne Pursuit* ended and it takes him to Paris for two days where he is looking for Napoleon's lost treasure. Napoleon Bonaparte was one of the great thieves of all time. He would plunder a country for all he could take and they never found all of that wealth, particularly what he skimmed off and what is called his lost cache. He hid that away and this is a thriller dealing with that. It also deals with a vendetta with one of my characters and what happened to his son two years ago and it draws Cotton into a dilemma where he has to choose between friend and country and that can always be difficult.

That sounds great. You are obviously very passionate about history. Is there a particular period you enjoy the most?

Well, I'm kind of across the board. I started off with the Middle Ages and then I got interested in ancient history, because I did the *Alexandra Link*. With *The Venetian Betrayal*, I was dealing with Alexander the Great. I did the 14th Century with the *Templars* and now with *Charlemagne Pursuit* I dip back into the Dark Ages with the 9th Century. So I'm kind of across the board.

Is there a period you would like to have lived in?

Well I like where we live right now. It's the best time to be in. I mean, those were tough times to live in.

Yeah, I think I would like to stick where I am too.

Yeah, those were very tough times, very short life expectancy.

With your interest in history, I understand you set up the History Matters with your wife Liz. Could you tell our readers about that?

Yes, when we were travelling around we noticed that the funds for historic preservation had pretty much dried up everywhere. No one has any money anymore and there are buildings and documents, statues and land, you name it, there are millions and millions of historical objects that are falling apart. So we came up with a way to raise money. We can't raise 100, 000 dollars but we can raise 5, 10 or 15, 000 dollars. And we do it a very unique way. I do it by teaching a writing seminar in the town. I teach and you buy your way in with a contribution to the historical calls. All the money goes to the project. I don't charge any expenses. It's a way to raise money from a group of people who might not normally contribute to historical preservation and those are writers. We have already done two events around the country and we've got five more to do this year.

Are you getting a good response?

Yeah we did very well. The first two events have been very small. I taught about 15 students in each, they were very small, but we raised several thousand dollars for both projects, which has really helped out greatly with that restoration.

Is there a way that people could get involved in the project, where people could just donate money?

It's not really about donating money, it's about buying into the seminar, coming in, I'll teach you about writing, the craft and your contribution goes to the project. You can go to my website, steveberry.org and check the events section. We ask you to come out and support the project.

Are there plans for you to come to the UK?

That would be pretty cool wouldn't it, to come over there? I'm coming to England in April for the London book fair. It'd be kind of neat to teach writing over there, that would be interesting. What we need is a

local project that wants to have the seminar. They sponsor it, put it all together and I just come and do it for them.

OK. So if anyone was interested in the UK you would be willing to come up?

Sure, just tell them to get in touch on my website and we'll see what we can do. We're gonna be there for about a week. We're coming over on April the 13th for the release of *The Paris Vendetta* in England. It will be released there and I will be there to do some promotion, and the London fair is a gathering of international book sellers from all over the world. My publisher's bringing me over for that.

So I understand it took you a while to get published and you had a few rejections. How did you cope with the rejection? Was it hard to take?

Oh yeah, it's very difficult to take. I mean, I went 12 years, 85 rejections for 5 manuscripts. It's very, very difficult to take but you just hang with it and put your mind to it and you make up your mind. You stick with it. It's very cliché but it is, you can't give up, so I didn't. I just made up my mind that if someone's name is gonna be on a book, it might as well be mine. So I just hung in there long enough till I got a break.

Did you have a job while you were trying to break through or were you solely dedicated to writing?

I was a lawyer. I just stopped about 14 months ago. I wrote all of my books while I worked. I didn't have time during the day. But if you wanna do it you got to do it.

You must have worked really hard.

Well I went in really early in the morning. I started writing about 6 in the morning till 9, before the day got started.

I can imagine that got quite stressful.

Oh it was quite stressful.

Is there any advice you can give to writers or potential writers, apart from to stick with it of course?

Well the simplest advice is the only advice. They have to keep writing, they have to write every day. They have to keep writing and read their genre and study their craft. The only way to get better at writing is to keep writing. There is no other way. Keep writing.

Do you ever get writer's block?

No, I don't think there is such a thing. I think it's when you get stuck once in a while, get a little frustrated. It will pass. Writer's block, for me, is when the little voice in your head stops talking to you. All writers have a little voice in their head that kind of tells you to

write. When that voice goes silent, that's where the block is and you're pretty much done. So keep writing, stay with it, you have to apply yourself. It's a discipline, it's not an obsession, you don't get obsessed with it, but it is a discipline.

You said about reading around your genre. Do you read a lot about people who write in your genre?

Sure, I'm a thriller junkie. I read a lot of thrillers. I read Dan Brown and David Morrell and Lee Childs.

How do you find time to fit all this in Steve?

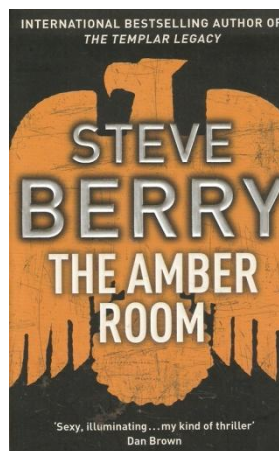
Well you just write everyday but you got to read your genre to keep up and see what's going on and keep up. I don't read as many books as I used to but I still read some.

You mentioned Dan Brown there. Do you like being associated with him? Because a lot of people give him a hard time.

No not at all. I wouldn't be here if not for Dan because he brought the genre back to life in 2002, when he did he gave a lot of authors a chance. I am honoured.

Have you met Dan?

I have not met him personally but we send him a book because he blurb'd my first book and he always sends me a little thank you note or an email to tell me how much he appreciates it.



Oh that's nice. So have you started work on the next book?

Yeah, when it's finished it'll be coming out later this year. It's called *The Emperor's Tomb* and Cotton will be off to China for an adventure. And I am writing the 2010 book right now.

Plenty to keep you busy then?

Oh yeah, I been staying right with it. I have to keep going. It's one year to turn it in so it takes you every day of that year to get it done.

Any plans to do something outside the thriller genre?

No I'll stick with the suspense thriller for a while. Sure I would like to write some other stuff but you got to stick with your genre to keep your audience, but maybe one day though.....

Visit Steve's website for details:

www.steveberry.org/



THE COMIC STRIP PRESENTS

**CHRIS WADE LOOKS AT THE
LANDMARK SHOW THAT GAVE BIRTH
TO THE FORERUNNERS OF
ALTERNATIVE COMEDY AND SELECTS
HIS TOP FIVE EPISODES**



Some comedy just never gets boring. The 1980s was the decade in which alternative comedy burst on to the screen, forever to change the face of British TV humour. Before the wave of shocking young comics was unleashed, UK TV was quite clean; it was either your clichéd Northern working class comedians as seen on the show *The Comedians* or safe duos like Morecambe and Wise and *The Two Ronnies*. But as the 70s became the 80s, and in the aftermath of punk rock, there was a whole new rebellion on the way. It began at the Comedy Store in London, where a group of exciting and unconventional comics began to take the stage. They included Peter Richardson, Nigel Planer and Alexei Sayle. Soon, the small band of clowns opened their own club, *The Comic Strip*, which was situated in a seedy strip bar in Soho. The shows, which attracted various misfits, punks and curious punters, consisted of three double acts. Two insane, violent and occasionally shocking comedians were billed as 20th Century Coyote; their real names were Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson. The other act was Planer and Richardson as *The Outer Limits*, a pair of suited up weirdoes who acted out high speed movie spoofs and unconventional improvisation. The other act was a female duo who weren't instantly hilarious but soon found their craft; they were French and Saunders. Quite soon the *Comic Strip* began to garner a lot of attention- firstly the cool cats were dropping by. People like Robin Williams

were coming down and taking the stage as the fun went on into the wee early hours. Things were becoming exciting very quickly. In a *Time Out* article, the first line read:

"At last, a comedy group has its hands on Monty Python's holy grail. They are The Comic Strip..."

Julian Temple shot a film, a kind of half stand up and half plot movie that eventually hit cinemas in 1983, double billed with teenage comedy *Porkys*. Then it was TV that took an interest. The BBC was looking to introduce more revolutionary content into their schedule and it was them that went for the Rik Mayall and Ben Elton project, *The Young Ones*. But it was Channel 4 that commissioned the *Comic Strip* team and they took a big chance on letting these nutty "Sex Pistols of comedy" come up with some ideas. The first episode, titled *Comic Strip Presents...* Four Go Mad in Dorset, went out on Channel 4's opening night and it shocked many, but proved to be spectacularly popular.

As the series went on, many future stars to be made their earliest TV appearances. If one man came out of *The Comic Strip* as the mastermind, then that man was Peter Richardson. Directing and writing the majority of the episodes, Richardson's aim was to make each episode completely different to the last one and for them all to stand alone as "films." It was also said to be the alternative version of the *Carry On* films. Some were great, others average and the

odd one bad. But on the whole The Comic Strip Presents is just one of the best shows the UK has ever produced.

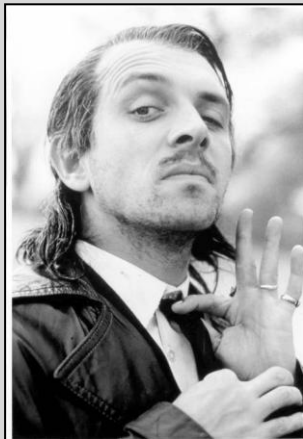
"It was a hit and miss thing," admitted Richardson. "We were always trying to do something different, so some of them went very wrong." The show was also a good springboard for Britain's biggest comedy performers and all went on to achieve massive success. Still, they were all keen on returning to play roles in Richardson's surreal series of spoofs.

"Because everybody had their own thing going," said Richardson, "no one was trapped by the Comic Strip. Rick and Adrian did the Young Ones, Dawn and Jennifer did their own thing, but everyone came together to do these things, they still kept coming in if they were available. They weren't sitcoms, they were filmed stories. It was always tricky to try and get people in one place at one time. I guess the kind of anarchic side to it was pretty new. People wanted different looking things, things with a different feel..."

Everyone kind of has a favourite Comic Strip episode, but there's no way I could choose just one. So here's my top five.....

1, MR JOLLY LIVES NEXT DOOR

Perhaps the vilest of all the many Comic Strip episodes, it was written by Rik Mayall, Roland Rivron and Adrian Edmondson. Released in the midst of the third series in 1988, the plot concerns two disgusting drunken bastards who run "dreamy time escorts" and become tangled in a seedy plot involving a violent sicko killer called Mr. Jolly (played by a sleazy Peter Cook), a smooth crime lord (Peter Richardson) and the murder of NICHOLAS BLOODY PARSONS! This mad comic farce is more like an extremely disgusting episode of Bottom, with Rik and Ade at their most horrid, rampaging through the town, killing people, running them over at every chance, spending thousands of pounds on gin and being sick on police men. It is constantly hilarious. Only problem is I could have watched a full series of these two nasty piss heads and i regret they



never made another episode containing these characters. Well, they kind of did, with Bottom and Filthy Rich and Catflap, but for me Mr Jolly Lives Next Door was their finest moment as down and outers.

2, WAR



The second ever Comic Strip film is a wild, surreal, messily filmed but ultimately fantastic satirical epic. This is the kind of stuff that really made them anarchic and it contains a great cast of British talent. Dawn French and Daniel Peacock are two young lovers torn apart by the changing climate of a hectic, war torn Communist run England. Highlights include a tent of American GIs taking part in a game of Russian Roulette ("My name's Screwball!"), Rik Mayall's dumb army commander, Robbie Coltrane as the Japanese leader, Peter Richardson's turn as Miguel ("I kill communists with my teeth.") and the huge shoot out in the farm house. The slap dash quality of the direction here only makes it more charming and the way each actor plays at least two or three roles each reminds me of Lindsay Anderson's O Lucky Man but on a more outrageous scale. Rarely again did the Comic Strip team match the brilliance of this episode.

3, A FISTFULL OF TRAVELLERS CHEQUES

One of the most well known and well loved of the Comic strip films, it is primarily a spoof of the spaghetti western movies, the kind where black clad rogues with guns haunt barren landscapes and partake in bloody showdowns with their enemies. Here Mayall and Richardson play two English tourists visiting the obscure country side in full western movie outfits, with mock film

drawls and a keen interest in living out their great movie fantasies. Richardson does a great Lee Van Cleef routine as the boys encounter Mr Bastardos (Keith Allen) who runs the Hotel Bastardos ("More like Hotel Unpleasantos!!"), two Australian singles (French and Saunders), a seedy lost loser (Nigel Planer) and a Yorkshire murderer dressed as a Matador (Edmondson). It's hilarious from start to finish and goes beyond the spoof and right into other areas as the plot becomes more chaotic. Keith Allen claims to have given the best head butt in show business in this film and to be fair he does give Daniel Peacock a real knock on the noggin.



4, **FOUR MEN IN A CAR**



Released in 1998, it was the first Comic Strip film for five years and reunited much of the classic cast list. Planer, Mayall, Edmondson and Richardson play four wanker type salesman on their way to Swindon, where only one of them will get their dream job. Sharing a car seemed like a bad idea from the start but when Mayall buys a cursed 80s compilation CD, the ride turns a turn for the worst and the men are injured and stranded in the middle of nowhere when the car packs in. Saunders appears as a reclusive writer with diabetes and Dawn French plays some kind

of saviour at the film's close to apparently save these four chumps who are down on their luck. For me, it was the only Comic Strip film I had the chance to watch on its first broadcast, as a 13 year old lad, thinking it was totally fantastic. Of course, the classic episodes were before my time but Four Men in a Car was good enough to get me interested in the early ones. Two years later, Four Men in a Plane appeared, with much of the same cast and premise, only for me it wasn't quite as good as this one.

5, **MORE BAD NEWS**

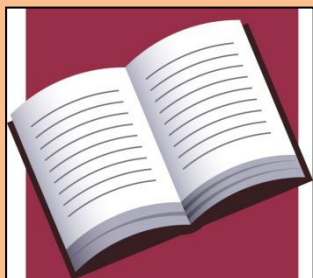


For me Bad News are the superior rock n roll spoof band, more believable and funny than the more widely well known group Spinal Tap, played with perfection by, once again, Mayall, Edmondson, Richardson and Planer. Ozzy once claimed to not like Spinal Tap and said Bad News was much more like the reality. Maybe that's why Ozzy makes an appearance in this one, as the four disastrous heavy metallers embark on a tour amidst the release of their debut LP, which is set to reach its climax when the boys perform at Castle Donnington before 250,000 screaming fans. The fact they really appeared at the Metal festival and that Mayall himself claims that it was as scary as it looked, makes the episode somewhat more enjoyable. The lads spoof Heavy Metal but the spoofing is generally mild and harmless. Ade plays their pretentious leader, Vim and Planer plays a Neil from The Young ones type. Mayall is fantastic as Colin, by day a short haired straight who works at a bank and lives with his mum. He even manages to make this guy tragic too, although not quite as tragic as Richie from Bottom.

I could go on, but today these are my five favourite episodes, the kind I never tire of watching. Of course, next week they might be totally different. But I am not going to write them again next week because that would be mental. - Chris Wade

A BIT ABOUT THE BOOK PICTURED RIGHT

by Francis P Fortunehole
(The Jazz Parson)



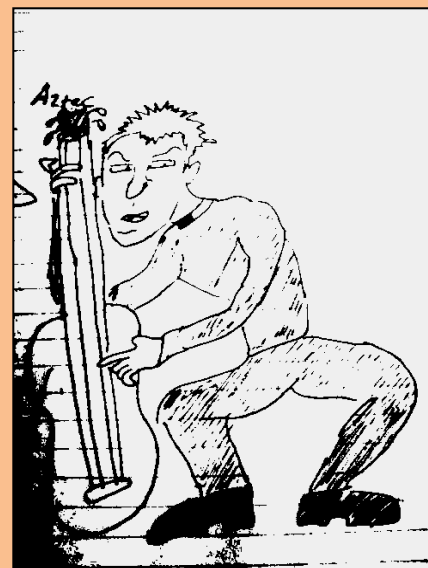
I first read this book when I was living in a brown paper bag on the streets of Philadelphia. My home was situated beside a tramp with a glass eye and Tom Cruise, pre Top Gun, and the pair of them used to roll doobies with me. These were fun times and every time I pick up the book pictured above, it takes me back to my hungry, yet formidable days on the sidewalks of America. Some might say I lived the American dream, others will not say this. I will say neither, but what I will say is that this is one special book; it is almost life changing in its simplistic bastardisation of the lovely corn fields and the generic, often tiring English language. I would read it of a night, crying tears of laughter and pain, sorrow and joy, and hurtings, due to the deformity of my spine. The form I had the book in was a presentation file given to me by a mysterious man with a blue tinge to his skin. He told me he was from the future, a place that had become run down with crime and poverty. He told me to watch these files as they could go some way to change the world for the better. He was, I guess you could say, a little like Kyle Reece from the Terminator but in paper form and not being played by actor Michael Biehn (also of Aliens, where he played Hicks). Tom Cruise hated the file, and attempted to sabotage its contents several times. If it weren't for the quick thinking glass eyed bum next door, called Monty, this file would have been burned to a crisp. Cruise was banished from our tramps corner and subsequently went on to have a respectable career in film, starring in such films as Legend (with Tim Curry as the red bloke), Days of Thunder and eventually Eyes Wide Shut, the pervy one directed by Stanley Cube Brick (think that's his name). As I reached 30, my life progressing gradually, I decided to take the text to a small publishing house in New Jersey. The owner immediately told me to "Fuck off!" and "Destroy

the vile content of the file." I did fuck off, but didn't destroy the file; instead I took it to Mr Bluetac, of the Tri county area, who adored it and published it in the late Eighties, after the demise of punk rock, Maggie Thatcher and the New Romantic wave of the pop charts. Times were a changing, minds were expanding, thanks to the Happy Mondays and other hippy throwbacks. This sexy book was embraced not only in the Greater Manchester area but also in Halifax, particularly in the Piece Hall where they erected a statue of the book in the form of Levi Stubbs. No one has ever met the writer of the book, Coco Coughingfit, or ever seen his fucking face or throat. Does he even exist? Well the answer is yes, he did, as his drawings are seen in various caves in the South of France. No one knows where or when Coco existed, as there are even references made to him in texts from as far back as 2000 BC. They are also mentioned in Egyptian, Greek and Aztec mythologies. There are even mentions of him in relation to the construction of Stone Henge and the original production of Cilla Black's Blind Date TV show.

This brings me to the reason why this book was released. It has within its hallowed pages a deep message for all with a thinking approach to brainism. For me the message involves treasure, pens, letters to Kenneth Williams, a mug of hot coffee, Phil Spector's production techniques, Diana Ross in the bath and The Grumbleweeds forgetting their mums. To others, who are wrong, its message is to hate all men and iron all women into pressing form, thereafter to be framed or placed in a photo album. But you can make of it whatever you like. It is entirely up to. Just don't forget the marmalade, whatever you do.

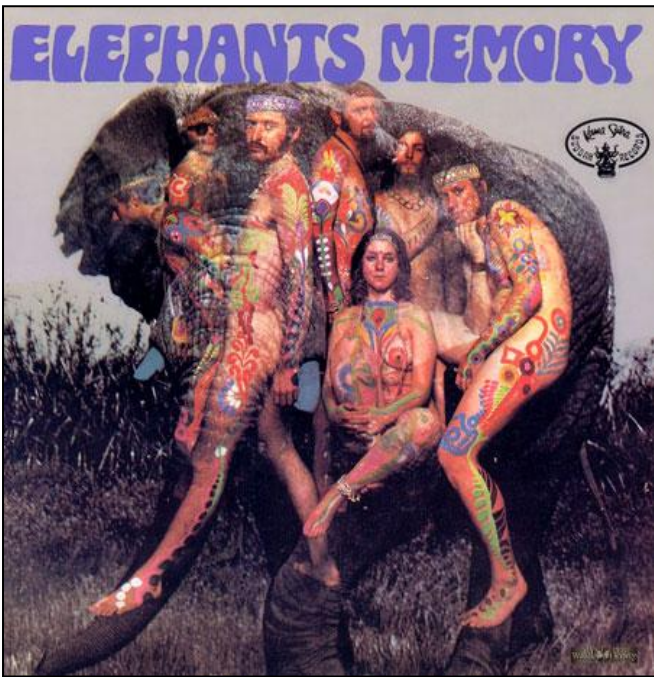
Thanking you.

The Jazz Parson



ELEPHANTS MEMORY

IT IS ANNOYING WHEN YOU LIKE A BAND BUT NO ONE YOU KNOW, APART FROM YOUR DAD, KNOWS WHO THEY ARE. WELL ACTUALLY IT'S NOT SO BAD REALLY, COS MY DAD IS ONE COOL CAT, BUT ANYWAY, ONE SUCH BAND IS THE OFFBEAT ELEPHANTS MEMORY. PERHAPS BEST KNOWN FOR BACKING JOHN LENNON'S PLASTIC ONO BAND DURING THE EARLY 70S AND HAVING THEIR MUSIC FEATURED IN THE FREAK OUT SCENE IN MIDNIGHT COWBOY, CHRIS WADE TELLS THE STORY OF ONE GREAT LOST BAND.....



Rick Frank and Stan Bronstein met on the New York strip club circuit. Frank, a drummer and vocalist, Bronstein a saxophonist, formed what would become Elephants Memory in 1968. The initial line up was Frank, Bronstein and a certain Carly Simon, who was with the group for around six months before going off to start a solo career (*"I wonder what happened to her then?"*) The band finally came together as a full unit in 1969, when the duo were joined by John Ward on guitar, Chester Ayres on second guitar, Myron Yules on the bass and the trombone, Richard Sussman on keyboards and Michal Shapiro on lead vocals. They delighted in outrage and specialized in crazy live shows. Listening back now to their early LPs, one instantly compares them to Frank Zappa. Their debut album, titled simply Elephants Memory was a mind bending head fuck fusion of psychedelic rock n roll, powerful drive, strange brass sections, jazz and surreal lyrics. It was released on Buddah Records in 1969, a label more famous for disposable pop than freak out music (although they did release Beefheart's first album). The album, pictured left, is a real lost classic

and features material that no one has ever quite replicated again. Beefheart and Zappa's lunacy is well known, but these guys were just as good and never seemed to get the credit. Songs like Super Heep, which conjures up the most varied of images is a masterpiece of Dadaist lyrics and disjointed, freaky ensemble playing. There is even a track about Yoghurt and one called Hot Dog Man, where the band chatted to real hot dog vendors in the street with some music accompanying it, a tune which was co penned by Tony Visconti and his wife of all people. In fact, Visconti was then on his way to becoming one of the era's best producers and Michal remembers the New Yorker going on about Bowie quite a lot, before of course anyone knew who he was:

"He was working with David Bowie at the time I joined the band, and he flew in from the UK every now and then and would visit. My impression of him (back then) was that he dressed very elegantly, always looked prosperous and well groomed, compared to us, who were quite scraggly. He attended a few rehearsals, and would play his latest projects for us. He was a friend of Stan and Myron's actually, so they socialized, and I was not included in that."

As for the music it was all very unusual and although the horn section may have been popular in them days, Elephants Memory debut had little of the commercial appeal of bands like Blood, Sweat and Tears and was considered very off the wall at the time. The weirdest fact about the album is that it was produced by Wes Farrell, future hit maker for The Partridge Family.

Two tracks on the LP stand out for more than a sonic reason though. Old Man Willow, a strange and dreamy drugged up waltz with hauntingly beautiful vocals from Michal, and a nutty loud rocker called Jungle Gym at the Zoo (*"YOU SURE LOOK LONELY IN THAT CAGE!"*) were both used on the sound track to the classic 1969 movie, Midnight Cowboy. Typically, the songs were used in the film's trippy sequence, a Warhol style party where the camera spirals the room and the glorious sound of Elephants Memory fills the

air. It is a dream like, hypnotic sequence and perhaps one of the most iconic moments for Elephant's Memory. Of course, when the songs began to garner attention in *Midnight Cowboy*, Buddah rereleased the debut album and re-titled it *Songs from Midnight Cowboy*.

Michal Shapiro, that haunting voice on the first LP is now working as Director of Music Programming for Link TV while she is a keen painter and still releases music. I tracked her down and asked her how she came to join this group of misfits:

"I don't know if it's right to call them a crazy band of misfits," says Michal. "I think we were all misfits back then. And many musicians are intrinsically outsiders; that is the nature of being an artist. We don't fit in with everyone else, even if we want to. At any rate, I was 19 when I officially joined the band, and I can't say that I was a mature or savvy person, or a particularly good judge of character. I had been very sheltered, and just wanted to get out of my parent's house, and it was the tail end of the sixties, when all my peers were throwing the rules out the window. The actual events that led up to my joining the band were quite simple; my sister's husband had a friend in the band, Richard Sussman, the keyboard player and composer. They had just lost Carly Simon and subsequent to that, they lost another fine singer named Martha Velez. What I heard from them regarding Ms. Velez was that she lost her voice after a few weeks of working with the band. I can imagine that this could be true- the band was fully electrified, the drums, the horns, everything, and frequently played with inadequate monitors. Back then, singers were not as insistent upon hearing themselves well. That's a recipe for blowing out your voice. I auditioned for the band, and I got the gig contingent upon working with them at an uptown club for a trial week. It was hard, because I had a day job too, but I was very young, and could go without much sleep. So I got the gig."

Did Michal have much input in writing the tracks?

"Yes, the band was very egalitarian that way. Up until I joined the band, Stan Bronstein and Rick Frank were writing the words. When they were stuck for words they would ask everyone to contribute. BTW, I almost did not get the gig with the band when I told them at the audition I thought the words to most of their songs weren't good. I think I said something like "songs about yogurt and hot dogs are silly, but as your singer, no one will know that's how I feel, and I will sing them with conviction." I think it's amazing that they took me on anyway after that. And I co-wrote several songs for and with them while I was a band member."

I asked her about her influences and what she brought to the overall sonic sounds of Elephant's Memory:

"I grew up with classical music and frequently sang along with it, so I was used to singing in head register. During the early sixties I was of course singing along to a lot of Joan Baez's soprano voice. When I was around 12 I also got the bluegrass bug and between that and rock and roll I started singing a lot more in chest register. So my vocal and musical influences are pretty much all over the map. David Was recently called me a musical meme, and that may be true. It's hard for me to evaluate. People have told me that I was a good foil to all the men and their blazing testosterone. I think it is true that after I left, something was missing, but what that was I can't be sure. I will leave that to others to define."

Michal was not to stick around and for that matter neither was much of the rest of the band. There was a serious change in the line up by 1970. I asked Michal why she ended up leaving the group:

"I had joined the band because beyond dreaming of success, I wanted to learn more about music and become a better musician. I admired Stan and Myron because they were much older than me and had played in some famous big bands together. I thought Richard Sussman was an extremely talented composer, and that *Old Man Willow* was a terrific song. That song was what drew me to the band, in a big way. But there were currents of tension going on in the band that I did not know about at the time, and they got worse after the first record was released. The beginning of the end for me though, was when they had a big meeting in which they told me that they didn't think my work on the album was good enough. This was a very hard thing for a young person to take; I couldn't understand why they had not told me that they were dissatisfied with my work until AFTER the record was released (we were shut out of any mixing process). I felt that they should have said something during the recording, not when it was already too late. At that point my young ego decided to prove to them that I was worthy and that they needed me. So I stayed on for about another year until the band had been reviewed quite a bit, always with me getting a nice mention. Then I felt vindicated, and I gave notice. I was very disappointed in how they never tried to lift me up, or educate me, or even to protect me. My tenure with the band was completely "sink or swim" on every level. In my naiveté, I had thought they would be like my family, but they were just a bunch of musicians absorbed in their own thing. I expect there's some education to that, though. So I left the Memory to go back to college, and decided that if I was going to do music, I would start from the beginning, in a garage band. I majored in Fine Arts, sang in a bunch of different cover bands, and got my degrees."

Of course, Elephant's Memory will always be remembered most for their association with John

Lennon and The Plastic Ono Band. They were Lennon's backing band on his 1972 album *Sometime in New York City*, a truly unforgettable album (although hardly well received at the time) and they even toured with him for various concerts. A live document of their 1972 New York show is commercially available and shows the group on top form together. While working with Lennon may have been fantastic, it has kind of been the reason Elephants Memory have not become widely known for their own music. As someone said, they have become "a side note to Lennon." They also backed Yoko on a solo album, but for me it is in their own work I find the real gold. By then the group still featured Bronstein, and Frank, who were now joined by Tex Gabriel, Arthur Kaplan and Adam Ippolito. The band's new bassist, **Gary Van Scyoc** told me a little bit about how he joined the band and those days spent with a certain John Lennon:



"I joined the band in late 1970 after leaving my band on Columbia Records called Pig Iron. John and Yoko came down to our rehearsal studio one night in Greenwich Village called Magnagraphics. He had heard a tape of a live radio broadcast that we had recently done on WLIR Long Island NY. John was given the tape by our mutual friend at the time, activist Jerry Rubin. We jammed on all John's favourite old R&R songs till our fingers were sore and John started talking about how he missed playing in a band, how hard it was to get the then Plastic Ono band members together as they were jet setting around with their own projects. So he wanted to join Elephants Memory. We finally agreed to call the merger the Plastic Ono Elephants Memory Band. Yoko quickly came up with P.O.E.M. That was the beginning of a very intense two years of playing and recording. John produced our Elephants Memory LP on Apple in 1972. John picked my song *Wind Ridge* as the most likely single and wrote some beautiful piano lines for the tune but wouldn't take any writing credits for his contribution. John and I got along tremendously well and Yoko said it was because we were both number "9's" in her numerology studies. We played

Madison Square Garden in the summer of 72 as well as many of the day's top TV shows. All available on DVD now. Dick Cavett Show, Mike Douglas, Jerry Lewis Telethon etc. We did Yoko's *Approximately Infinite Universe* in 73 which is a double LP. Also quite a few singles for her. *Woman is the Nigger of the World* was the single from *Some Time in NYC LP*."

What next for Elephants Memory after their brief time with the former Beatle? Well, the band soldiered on as Gary explains:

"After our Apple records stint we moved on to RCA in the states and were on Polydor LTD in England for our *Angels Forever* LP and spent quite a bit of time in Wales recording the LP as well as touring all over playing concerts at the Roundhouse in London and a gig at the original Cavern in Liverpool. The Elephants Memory was still together up until 1977 and were on Muse records when the band had to fold because of all the record labels dumping bands for the New Wave in 76."

The history of the band is somewhat messily pieced together on the net and I was glad to get an official year for the cut off of the band. It seems like so many other 60s groups, the Elephants Memory suffered the wrath of the negativity that the punk and new wave era placed upon "veteran" rockers. So what happened to the players who made up the sound of Elephants Memory. Gary has all the info:

"I am in touch with everyone in the band except our drummer Rick Frank who passed in 2003. Stan Bronstein went on to play with Aerosmith and many other acts and Adam Ippolito went on to join Cool and the Gang, playing on huge hits like *Celebration* and *It's too Hot*. Tex Gabriel is a studio player in Nashville. I myself wrote a book in 2007 called *Shortcuts to Improving Your Bass Playing*. The book is available on my website: <http://www.garyvanscyoc.com>"

Gary himself has gone on to have a great career, playing for a wide range of artists including Chuck Berry, Neil Sedaka, Paul Simon and Stevie Wonder. It is nice to know that this band had varying degrees of further success and continued to create music and art for years after. Michal herself has been very active in the 40 years that have passed since she left the Elephants Memory:

"I've always painted," she says, "and I always loved music. I can't remember a time when it was any different. And my goal has always been quite simple: Be sincere, put in the work, and aim for excellence. Musically, I think that I have grown quite a lot. I've studied voice, I've been a band leader, written my own material, toured internationally and I have a much better understanding of the way bands interact, what goes into the process of creating music, etc. I also think my perception of music has grown over the years. I've produced award winning world music compilations, and now I'm the director of Music

Programming for Link TV. As such I must listen to music from all over the world. Some of it is not easy, but it is my responsibility to meet it on its own terms. Not all music functions as we are brought up to hear it. It takes a very open mind to get into it all. I also live with a musician whose music is very formally sophisticated. Listening to it every day has also changed the way I hear music. I've travelled to unusual places, and I've grown with each trip. In particular, Uzbekistan was mind expanding, and I recently went on a music gathering trip to Taiwan and heard some extraordinary stuff. You can check it out on my video blog: www.linktv.org/worldmusic/blog. It's Taiwan Journey parts 1-6. That first performance by the Nanguan singer is a killer."

It seems Michal is enjoying life, a life and work she runs herself without having to listen to anyone's rules.

"I love my job," she continues, "because I am not beholden to anyone telling me what to push, what is or isn't good music. I am the arbiter. I've been in a position to expose obscure but deserving artists to a broader audience and I have done so. That gives me tremendous satisfaction. For me music is not a fashion statement, which unfortunately in the commercial world, it too often is. Up until I was forty, I kept trying to "make it" with my music. But I did not have any understanding of business, so no matter how good my music was, I had no way to get any further up on the food chain. After I stopped trying, ironically, I got involved in the business end of things, and found that I no longer wanted to make my living as a performer. But I still wanted to sing out, so I started singing bluegrass with some old buddies who really have a deep love of that genre. I do that every now and then and it's a blast. It's like coming home. We play some of the songs I've written specifically within the bluegrass tradition, and they go over very well. I put out a CD of my original material about 10 years ago, mostly just to have it documented. It's called "Full Flower" for obvious reasons. My partner thinks I should also record the Bluegrass music I've been doing. Maybe he's right. As for my painting, that's another subject of its own, and I don't imagine you want to focus on that here. If you are interested you can go to my website and to the gallery section."

But do people still remember the Elephants Memory band? I asked Michal if she ever meets or comes across the odd fan of the band:

"I am part of the first generation who are old enough to be contacted by someone from their deep past via Facebook! I was recently contacted by someone who was a fan, and who had even taken me out on one date. He wondered if I remembered him and I actually had given him a fair amount of thought over the years. We met again, and now we correspond from time to time. But it's not like someone would know that I used to sing with the

band, I don't tend to mention it and so people would not know about it from me. I don't even own a copy of the LP, though I was sent a bunch of the CD re-issues a while back from the record company. But recently I found out about the controversy over who the female singer was. I even found out that because people were reading my name wrong, as Michael, they thought I might be a transsexual! So I've started to be a bit more forthcoming about it of late, just to set the record straight, and that is how I am hearing from former fans."

Anyone interested in hearing the band should visit the Amazon store, where you can have a preview of some of their tracks and purchase their albums. If you like off the wall interesting stuff, Elephants Memory will most certainly do the job.

ALBUM DISCOGRAPHY



Island In The Sky (1968)

This is in fact an album by Long Island sextet The Tuneful Trolley. Several members of Elephant's Memory performed the brass heard on the LP.)

Midnight Cowboy Soundtrack (1969)

The songs "Jungle Gym Zoo" and "Old Man Willow"

Elephant's Memory (1969)

In my view the essential purchase!

Take it to the Streets (1970)

Some Time In New York City (1972)

With John Lennon & Yoko Ono

Elephant's Memory (1972)

Produced by John Lennon & Yoko Ono

Approximately Infinite Universe (1973)

With Yoko Ono

Bio (1973)

Chuck Berry album featuring members of Elephant Memory

Angels Forever (1974)

Our Island Music (1976)

Credited to Stan Bronstein/Elephant's Memory Band

Live in New York City (1986)

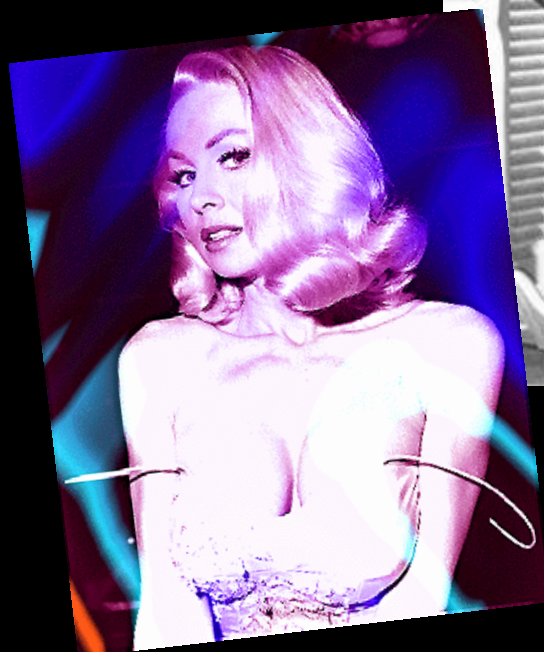
A live John Lennon album, recorded in 1972

PIN UP

JOI LANSING

1950s B movie actress and model, nicely summed up as "a beautiful beacon in a Sargasso of bad filmmaking"

Perhaps now viewed as a minor B movie cult star and classic 50s pin up girl, Lansing started her screen career alongside Orson Welles and ended it in obscure flicks like *Hillbillies in a Haunted House*. Joi Lansing was born Joyce Wassmandorff in Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 6, 1928. By the late 1940s, she had made her way to Hollywood, where she began modelling assignments and making brief walk-ons in films. She made a brief appearance in the Orson Welles classic *Touch of Evil*, however, her film career didn't come to fruition, so she resumed her television career in a series of guest spots on the TV series *The Beverly Hillbillies*. In the fifties and sixties, Lansing was often compared to Jayne Mansfield and seen as something of a pin up, hence her appearances so often being scantily clad in movies. Other notable film roles included *Hot Cars* in 1956 and starring with Frank Sinatra in *Marriage on the Rocks*. By the mid 60s Lansing was working as a night club entertainer and singer while still making notable appearances on film. She shot her final film *Bigfoot* in late 1969, and the film was released in October 1970. Sadly, as her career was winding down Lansing was stricken with cancer and passed away on August 7, 1972, at age 44. She was survived by her fourth husband, to whom she'd been married since 1960 yet the couple had lived apart for years. Frank Sinatra is rumoured to have paid her medical bills after her death. Another interesting fact is that she was a Mormon, never drank or smoked and although she frequently shed her clobber, never posed nude. She is also the subject of Joseph Dougherty's strange biopic paperback *Comfort and Joi*. So delight in some snaps of this little known pin up.



COMEDY REVIEW:

ARTHUR SMITH

WEST YORKSHIRE PLAYHOUSE

Sunday 21 February 2010

Review by Chris Wade



Titled on the tickets as Arthur Smith At Large, this evening of live comedy certainly lived up to my expectations. I have always been a fan of Arthur Smith, even as a kid when I saw clips of his work on Weekend at Wallop, as the milk man who gets murdered by Rik

Mayall in Filthy, Rich and Catflap and his 1997 appearance on Room 101. When Grumpy Old Men hit the screens, Smith was among the posse of miserable sods moaning about the shittiness of our nation. There was Rory McGrath and Rick Wakeman, but Arthur was always my favourite. So it seems Arthur, since his beginnings on the alternative comedy scene of the early 80s, has dipped into everything over the years. Of course, there is so much more than the above mentioned credits; he is a leading voice for Radio 2, a semi serious play write and fully recovered booze hound.

"Please welcome your entertainment for the evening," says a familiar voice over the PA. "ME!" Then out walks Arthur, very much the nation's favourite crumpled slacker, striding out on to the stage looking ready to make some Yorkshire folk piss themselves. To start with, Arthur listed through the many items that it was possible the crowd may know him from. He asked "Has anyone seen my slots on The One Show?" and "Some of you may have read my column in the Diabetes magazine." There were a few who did funnily enough, but the loudest "Yes" came when Smith mentioned that classic show Grumpy Old Men! It seems the show really boosted Arthur's popularity and the grouchiness fits perfectly with his slap dash, relaxed and totally comforting act.

This was in fact my first ever live comedy show and I am glad to say my virginity was taken by a great British talent (ooer and all that). To say this was a full on stand up routine wouldn't really do the evening justice. Evening is the key word it seems, as this show was very intimate (especially for us on the second row) and it really did feel as if you were sharing a

night personally with Mr Smith. He told jokes, no doubt about it, and some bloody great ones too. But Arthur was at his best when moaning about adverts, young people and anything that didn't tickle his fancy. Although, when Arthur recalled his many encounters with famous people, his amusing tales, I was most entertained. He was the alternative raconteur on this fine night. Stories involved a plane ride seated beside Barry Norman, when Arthur was having trouble choosing a film to watch and then realised he had his own private "Barry Norman to help him choose, now that's service." He apologised for launching Ruby Wax's career and he made some of us jealous when he told us he'd snogged Rachel Weisz. Smith made two hours fly by with his messy yet charming act, that wasn't so much an act as one great bloke chatting away in what appeared to be a spontaneous chain of thought.

About an hour in, Arthur announced he would have two special guests. First was the Leeds comedian Dave Bland, who was quietly intense and very funny, although some of his jokes may have offended some people (Jesus making love to him on the pavement, attending AA meetings so he can feel superior). Before the interval Arthur said he had another special guest, the Canadian singer Leonard Cohen. Of course, it was Arthur in disguise (an act he had performed at Glastonbury and Hay on Wye to great success) performing a superb rendition of I'm Your Man. The fact that Arthur's flies were undone during the song was slightly off putting, but when he realised, he showed us all his army boxer shorts anyway and pondered whether to have them done up or un done, or off all together.

He also gave the audience the chance to write down what made them grumpy on paper, which he then read out in a shambolic moment of brilliance as Arthur trawled through the sheets, dropped paper everywhere and even let slip a twenty pound note (thankfully he realised and picked it up before the show was over).

I can't pick any faults with Arthur's show. It felt fresh, relaxed and with much more heart to it than most stand up comedians you see on TV and DVD nowadays. The fact that Smith had a pop at Jimmy Carr ("He has no soul; just a reel of gags. Funny gags admittedly") tells me a lot. Arthur wants to make us laugh alright but he also wants to make us think, to stop and ponder what he says. He left us with a great poem and some points of advice, the best of which was "You can't make someone love you, you just stalk them and hope they give in."

I will go see Arthur again in the future, or Daphne Fairfax as he is known to the Streatham tax office. Some of the jokes may be old, but they're told with class by this comedy legend.

10/10

HOUND DAWG

MAGAZINE

Thanks for reading.....

.....And that