

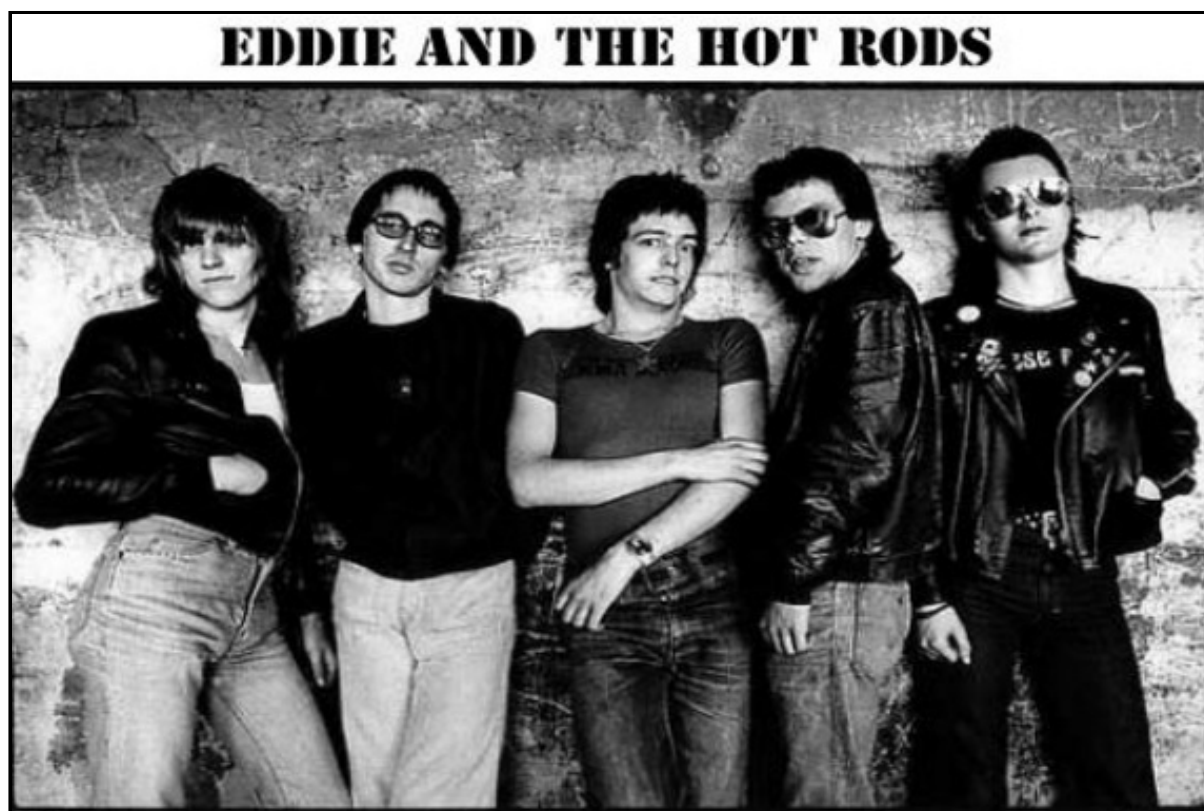


Essex Bands Page 2

ESSEX BANDS, PAGE 2, BY JOHN POWER.

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Eddie and The Hot Rods



As if Canvey Island hadn't done enough for Rock music when it produced Dr. Feelgood, no, it proved there was more to come, when Barrie Masters changed his name to 'Eddie', and guitarist Dave Higgs, who had been in a band with Lee Brilleaux called 'the Fix', gathered a group around him that they called 'The Hot Rods'. The rest of the line-up originally consisted of a second guitarist, Pete Wall, Rob Steel on bass, and Steve Nicol on drums, in 1975, and they played R&B covers, like the Feelgoods to begin with, but that soon developed into the fast paced high energy sound they became famous for.

Later in '75, they had soon gained themselves a residency in Kensington thanks to their Feelgood friends, then got a joint residency at the 'Nashville'. By the end of '75 they had been signed by Island records. The band had been joined by Lew Lewis, and Paul Gray replaced Rob Steel on bass as they became well established in the lively Pub Rock circuit. 'Punk' Rock was just around the corner and they were supported at the Marquee by the 'Sex Pistols', who already regarded them as old fashioned, and the gig ended up in a fight, with the 'Hotrods' equipment getting trashed. Later, Pub Rock was credited as the precursor of 'Punk' but these were early days for a new generation of rockers. The Marquee Club management were not so fast to change horses and gave them a fortnightly residency alternating with AC/DC, and that produced an E.P. [extended play 45 disc], 'Live at the Marquee'. A single, 'Teenage Depression,' became a Top 20 hit. The 'Teenage Depression' L.P. also made it into the album charts. Then came another E.P., in '77, 'Live at the Speed of Sound' on which Graeme Douglas, from the 'Kursaal Flyers' played, live on one track, and improvised spontaneous overdubs on the other tracks. From then on Graeme became the second

guitarist with Higgs, although not without contractual problems with C.B.S., who he had signed with when in the 'Kursaals'.

1977, the year of the 'Punk' explosion the group took their high energy pub rock to the Rainbow Theatre, where they headlined; played five consecutive nights at the Marquee club; toured the U.S. for a month with the 'Ramones' and 'Talking Heads' and recorded with Rob Tyner of the M.C.5, 'Rob Tyner and the Hotrods', while they were there. Graeme Douglas penned a top ten hit for them, 'Do Anything You Wanna Do' in the summer of '77 in time for Reading Festival and before a November-December U.S. tour. They released a very successful album, 'Life On The Line' also in '77. The group had their name shortened to the 'Rods' by mistake or without consultation by their record company for the 'Do anything you Wanna Do' single, and many D.J.s thought it was a separate group. They split with Island Records in 1979, then they were signed to E.M.I. by the end of that year, for an album they called 'Fish and Chips'. Paul Gray left in 1980 to join 'Punk' outfit, 'the Damned' and was briefly replaced by Tony Cranney before they split up in 1981....for the first time. At first after '81 Barrie Masters joined the 'Inmates'. Steve Nicol joined 'One the Juggler'. In '84 Barrie and Steve reformed the Hotrods with Tony Cranney back on bass and a new guitarist in the shape of Warren Kennedy. That line-up produced a single 'Fought for You' and a mini live L.P., 'One Story Town'.....they split up again in '85. In 1992 Masters, Higgs, Nicol and Gray reformed for a European tour. Then Higgs was replaced by Steve Walway, who had been playing with Dr. Feelgood. Gordon Russel, also from the Feelgoods, then Mick Rodgers from Manfred Mann's Earth Band briefly became members.

In '94 they recorded the album 'Gasoline Days', but it wasn't released until '96. Several more band changes followed, with 'Madman' Keyo and Jess Phillip taking turns in the line-up. By 2005 all the pub rockers were bald or grey, with beer bellies and 'Punks' had reached a similar age, so the group rode a wave of nostalgia as they embarked on a 30th Anniversary Tour. They also released the 'Better Late than Never' album and a still energetic Eddie and the boys set off on European tours, four U.S. Tours, and a host of English gigs and festival appearances. In the U.S. The band have been thought of as 'Punks' since their first Stateside tour, and in 2009 they produced the 'New York Live' album. Their early pub rock days are acknowledged as an influence on 'Punk' despite the early punch up with the Sex Pistols. In 2012 they backed Status Quo on tour. Sadly Dave Higgs died in 2013 of multiple cancers. In May 2014 there was a memorial gig for him with Warren Kennedy taking his place alongside Masters, Gray, Nicol and Douglas. 2015, and the original-ish line-up, minus the late Dave Higgs, but including Graeme Douglas reformed to play the a memorial gig on Canvey Island, in honour of Dave Higgs, and this led to the idea for that line-up to do a small tour of key venues for the 40th Anniversary, also in honour of Dave Higgs, whose place in the line-up was to be taken by Richard Hogarth. The regular line-up remains Barrie Masters, Simon Bowles, Ian Dean, Richard Hogarth and Chris Taylor. There have been twenty other members over the years, who have created eight studio albums, five live albums, ten compilations, fourteen singles, and two E.P.s

The Kursall Flyers



Joe and Joline Public never quite got it about the Kursaals and what a brilliant and funny band they were. They grew up around Southend playing in the late '60s and early '70s playing mainly in 'Cow Pie', a Country and Western band

who picked up on the early Country Rock fusion in the U.S. seen in the work of bands like the 'Byrds', 'Flying Burrito Brothers', and post[ish]-psychedelic 'Workingmans Dead' of the 'Grateful Dead'. 'Cow Pie', named after comic mag hero, Desperate Dan's diet, had a floating line-up that reached as many as 14 members, fronted by 'Kursaal'-to-be Paul Shuttleworth. Most of the eventual 'Kursaals' drifted in and out of the ensemble. 'The Ugly Guys' were another spin-off from the Pie that also gave the 'Kursaals' the title of a song on their second album and a name for some of the band to revert to for more straightforward C&W music after their Pop era had faded. To the C&W, which Joe and Joline probably still associated with Val Doonican, the 'Kursaals' added rich lashings of Southend kitch icons, like the amusement park that gave them their name, and the Golden Mile, at the end of which it stood, which gave the title to their third album. With inspiration from local lad Mickey Jupp and his 'Orieoles', who's tune 'Cross Country' closed their first album, the humour beginning to show in 'Kung Fu', and some teen lyrics like 'Hit Records' and 'Pocket Money', it was time to take flight, with 'Chocs Away' for their first album, giving cover designers the chance to sculpt the five boys and an aquaplane in chocolate to recall the sweet bar with the Five Boys name.

The original 'Kursaals' line-up, formed in 1973 with Paul Shuttleworth as singer and front man in spiv second hand car salesman persona [borrowed later by the T.V. Fast Show's 'Swiss Tony' comedy sketches]; Richie Bull banjo, and later bass as well, after line-up changes; Graeme Douglas lead guitar [replaced by Barry Martin in 1976 when Graeme joined Eddie and the Hotrods]; Vic Collins on pedal steel guitar; Will Birch on drums; and Dave Hatfield on bass until '74. Their first gig was at Southend's Blue Boar pub also in '74. Their material was Country covers at first, but as the Pop image began to emerge it became clear that Paul, Vic and Graeme had strong songwriting talents and that Will and Ritchie has equally useful musical skills to bring to compositions. Pub Rock was beginning to take off big time in London and soon swept the country, so they supported their mates Dr. Feelgood and were seen by agents and record company reps, which led to the contract with U.K. Records for 'Chocs Away' and the follow-up album 'The Great Artiste', who is introduced on the record by Paul Shuttleworth as Ritchie Bull, when he begins a banjo solo. Another track on the album recalls another great event of the Golden Mile along the seafront [well Thames estuary], when custom cars were gleefully paraded up and down the Mile by the owners and spray artists. 'Called Cruising for Love', the reference is oblique rather than direct. The tracks 'Hit Records' and 'Speedway', from the first album were released to the singles market although the group's fan base was in the pubs and clubs. 'Speedway' recalls another place of local legend, Rayleigh Speedway, in a story line similar to the '50s Rock Ballad classic, 'Tell Laura I Love Her' about a motorcycling Rocker whose dying words after a crash give the song its title. 'Speedway's' hero instead decides to quit the game after his crash. This number was a climactic show stopper at live gigs due to Vic Collins and his pedal steel guitar, which he manages to contort into the sounds of speeding and crashing speedway bikes. I can smell the wood-alcohol fuel from here. In 1975 the group were the subject of a B.B.C. documentary film of them on tour, called 'So You Wanna Be A Rock 'n' Roll Star', after the 'Byrd's' song of that title. Also in that year the 'Kursaals' got to back their heroes 'The Flying Burrito Brothers' when they played U.K. Venues. Sadly that was after the premature death of legendary founding frontman, Gram Parsons, once also a 'Byrd', but who left that band after refusing to play to segregated audiences in South Africa.

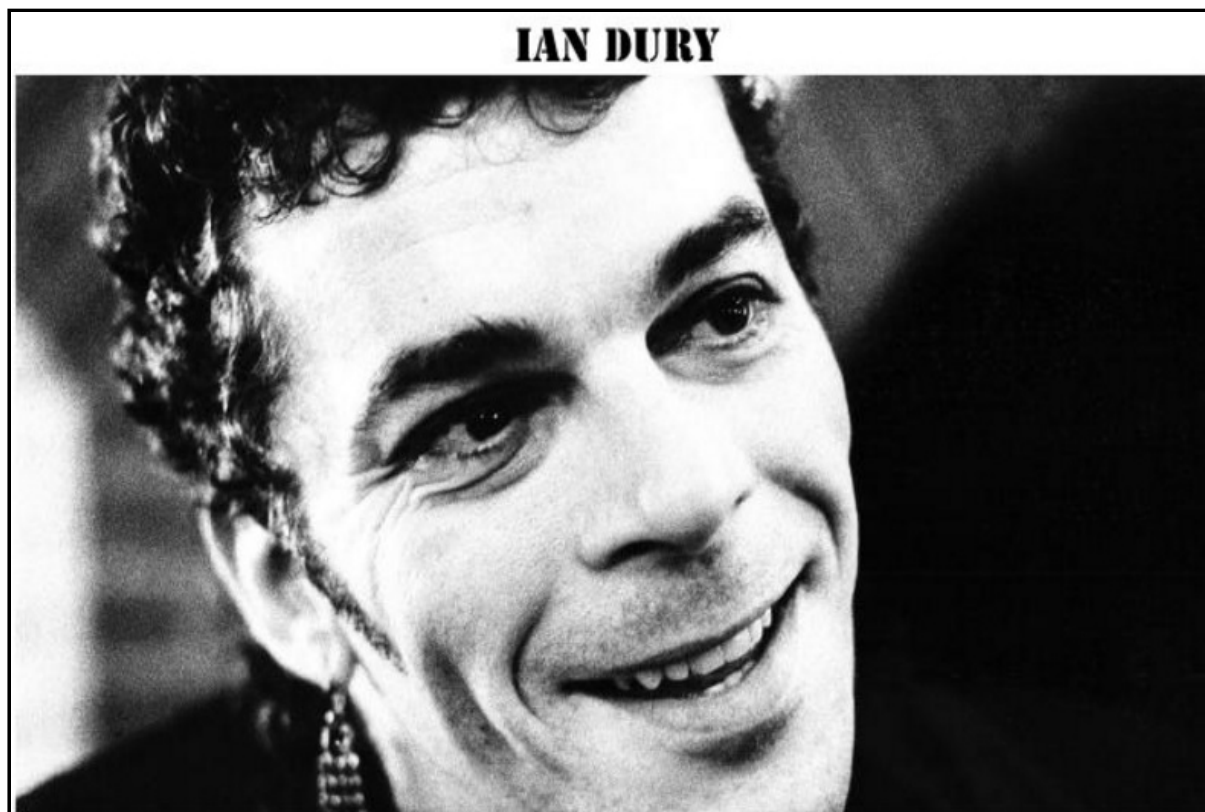
The group moved to C.B.S. Records for their third album, the duly titled 'Golden Mile', in 1976, produced by Mike Batt, who picked out the track, 'Little Does She Know.'..... ['That I Know, That She Knows, That I Know, She's Two-Timing Me'] as a single. Batt chose to augment the band with the soaring crescendos and crashing breaks of orchestral backing, sealing the humour which was worthy of the 'Bonzo Dog Do Dah Band', as Paul intoned sheer poetry in lines like, 'She was all in a quandry, as she finished her laundry' and 'Her escape was so urgent, she forgot her detergent', after the girlfriend spots the singer spotting her in a coin-op laundromat. The song reached no. 14 in the singles chart after a Top of the Pops group appearance sharing a stage with several washing machines. Sadly it was their only top twenty hit. But owning their albums became a matter of cult status. They were essentially a live act and so in 1976 Graeme Douglas dived deeper into pub rock status by joining some other Southend mates in Eddie and the Hot Rods where, after sharing writing credits for 'Little Does She Know', he went on to pen 'The Hot Rods' hit single 'Do Anything You Wanna Do', an anarchic sounding exclamation updating the slogan of Victorian Occultist Aleister Crowley : 'Do What Thou Wilt', which actually meant people's unique spiritual destiny in that instance. Crowley appeared on promotional material wearing a Mickey Mouse hat, so that people wouldn't take the old prankster too seriously.

So it was in 1976 that Barry Martin took over from Graeme for a live album, 'Five Live Kursaals' which was released in 1977, the year of the Punk Rock revolution. As it developed, Punk gave credit to pub rock for its influence, but the immediate eclipse made the Kursaals sound too elaborate for contemporary teen taste. After further changes to the line-up, the Kursaals finally parked the plane in the hangar. But various reformed versions appeared to do odd gigs, such as in '85 when a 'Best Of' album, 'In for a Spin', with all line-ups represented, and including later material produced by Muff Winwood, brother of Steve Winwood and fellow member of the legendary 'Spencer Davis Group'. In 1988 a version of the band played 'Fairport Union's' annual festival at Cropredy in Oxfordshire. They reformed more wholeheartedly in 2001. Paul Shuttleworth briefly formed 'The Latest Craze' and in 2003 Paul and Vic Collins revived 'The Ugly Guys' to get back to their Country Roots, with Steve Oliver on guitar, Andy Farrell from Southend's 'Hamsters' on bass, and Bob Clouter on drums. Paul's spiv persona was lost over time to a grey-haired and whiskered appearance more fitting to an elderly gentleman's Country outfit. They have released three albums.

Grahme Douglas is still in the music business, playing solo and with groups, and releasing solo albums. Will Birch formed 'the Records' and is author of 'No Sleep 'til Canvey', 'The Great Pub Rock Revolution' and 'Ian Dury, the Definitive Biography'. Ritchie Bull did a solo album of banjo tunes and is a dive supervisor to wrecks, and in exotic places like the Amazon. Vic Collins peddles his pedal steel guitar at any venue, and with who he connects with. I've seen him in my local, the 'Orange Tree', in Chelmsford, playing with 'Hunt, Runt, Stunt and Cunningham'. Arriva buses did the boys the honour of naming a Southend bus route after them [and the re-vamped theme park]: 'The

Kursaal Flyer' will take you there. All the original line-up turned up for the inaugural bus journey and a promotional photo shoot. They have also reformed in 2012 and 2014 to perform at the 'The Oysterfleet' pub on Canvey Island for the annual Lee Brilleaux [late singer of Dr. Feelgood]'s memorial gigs, and no doubt will again. There is a T.V. film documentary done originally for Anglia by Roger Deakin that is now on Youtube called 'Southend Rock', which covers all the groups mentioned in recent months, and its well worth a look.

Ian Dury



Ian's Rock persona was of a 'Jack the Lad' Essex boy, and nobody much bothered to challenge the legend that he was from good old working class Dagenham, but the truth was not as simple. He was actually born in the then Middlesex middle class suburb of Harrow during World War II to a mother who was a health visitor, and a father who was a bus driver [and later a chauffeur] in 1942. When his parents split up after the war Ian's mum went to live with her sisters in Cranham, near Upminster and a few more miles from Dagenham. On his mother's side the sisters had come from a 189 acre estate in N.W. Eire's County Donegal. Although Ian came to prominence in the 'Punk Rock' era, he was anything but a Punk, as his birth date reveals, and he had already had a successful career teaching Art.

Ian started school at Upminster Infants School, but at the tender age of seven tragedy struck when he went swimming at a pool in Southend and contracted polio. This led to 18 months in hospital at Braintree, and when he re-emerged with leg callipers it was to attend a school for the disabled until 1954, when he moved to the residential Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe. These tough regimes did much to harden Ian's personality and his devil-may-care outlook, with Cockney pretensions they served to put a shell around any feelings he had about his disability. His interests in Music and Art were soon in evidence and served as means of expression for his rebellious nature, as highly accurate portraits of the likes of Elvis Presley and Gene Vincent poured out of his pencil.

In 1958 he gained a place at Walthamstow School of Art, where his fellow trendy rebels included Viv Stanshall, later to be front man for the 'Bonzo Dog Do Dah Band', which explains a lot about Ian's sense of humour. Stanshall was another Essex man who had lived in Leigh-on-Sea and attended Southend High School. After a couple of the three years of the course one of their tutors became Peter Blake, founder of the 'Pop Art' movement, who was on the same level as Ian in choice of popular icons, and encouraged students to follow their own preoccupations, rather than push them into the then current fashion for abstract art or to follow academic representational work traditions. When Ian enrolled at the Royal College of Art for another three years of study for a Masters Degree, Blake again appeared as a tutor there, just as 'Pop Art' was beginning to find public acceptance. At the time of his graduation Ian married his first wife Betty Rathmell, who graduated in the same year, 1966. It was Peter Blake who got them their first home in Chiswick, and found illustration work for Ian, who also taught at Luton College of Further Technology, and then Canterbury School of Art. Someone told me he had done a teaching practice in Billericay, which was where he got the idea for the song 'Billericay Dickie', but the date they gave was 1973, and he was already an established teacher by then, so if the story was true then it would have been some six years earlier.

He certainly had started taking a practical interest in music and played in jam sessions at the Royal College while there with people I knew who had started their studies at Colchester School of Art, and in 1971 Ian formed the band 'Kilburn and the Highroads' as vocalist and co-writer with pianist Russell Hardy. Students from Canterbury were co-opted into the group in the shape of Keith Lucas on guitar and bassist Humphrey Ocean. They were very popular in the Pub Rock era and got a recording contract in 1974, but disbanded in 1975.

Ian then found another writing partner in Chaz Jankel, who had been in a group called 'Byzantium'. The duo were joined by Charley Charles on drums, 'Stormin' Norman Wall-Roy' on bass, and the saxist from the 'Kilburns', Davey Payne. 'Stiff Records' were next to Ian's manager's office and this led to them cutting a single 'Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll' / 'Razzle in My Pocket' and then the album 'New Boots and Panties'. They took off on the 1977 Stiff Records 'Live Stiffs' tour augmented by Johnny Turnbull on guitar and Mickey Gallagher, who had been in a version of 'the Animals', on keyboards, and they were christened the 'Blockheads'. Also on the tour bus were Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Wreckless Eric, and Larry Wallis, who had been in a later lineup of the 'Pink Fairies'. Ian and the Blockheads took off as the unexpected stars of the shows. Ian's early love of Jazz showed by the inclusion of Davey Payne's sax in the line-up and its effect on the group's sound when guitar groups were dominating the 'Punk scene'. The 'New Boots' album continued to sell, and the song of the same name, coupled with 'What a Waste' was a top ten hit in 1978, as was 'Reasons to Be Cheerful', while 'Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick' made it to number one in 1979. An album called 'Do it Yourself' also became a best seller, with a choice of 30 variations of the album sleeve to choose from.

Chaz Jankel left in 1980, to go solo and was replaced for a while by Wilko Johnson, from Dr Feelgood. A single called 'Laughter' c/w 'Superman's Big Sister' was their last offering for Stiff Records before they disbanded in 1981. But it wasn't long before Ian was back, on Polydor, with an album called 'Lord Upminster', and the not wholly well received, by the politically correct, 'Spasticus Autisticus'. He was reunited with Jankel in 1984 for the album '4000 Weeks Holiday', and with a new band called 'The Music Students'. Later in the '80s Ian diversified more into film and stage work, but continued to write with Jankel and Mickey Gallagher, resulting in 'Serious Money' and their own musical 'Apples'. In 1990 Ian reunited with 'the Blockheads' to do benefit gigs for Charley Charles, who was dying of cancer. The new drummer, Steve Monti produced another album for them called 'Warts 'n' Audience' [live], and the 1992 album 'The Bus Driver's Prayer and Other Stories', recalling his father's early profession. In 1995 he returned from the U.S. unwell, and was diagnosed with colorectal cancer but responded well after surgery and started doing charity work in Zambia for Unicef.

In 1998 'Mr Lovepants' his first album for 17 years was well received, but he was again diagnosed with cancer. His first wife had found the marriage difficult to cope with between domestic band practices and frequent absences on tour while she was trying to raise two children and they had parted, but remained good friends. In '98 he was married again when he had his cancer diagnosis, to girlfriend Sophy Tilson, the daughter of another successful Pop painter and constructionist of relief images, Joe Tilson. Sophy too was a sculptress and R.C.A. Graduate. They had had two more children. 1999 saw him again working for Unicef, this time in Sri Lanka. He did three sell-out gigs and a small tour, but was too ill to finish an album he was working on which was left to be finished by Chaz Jankel, with the unlikely teaming of Robbie Williams, who had been in Sri Lanka with Ian. His final gig was in February 2000, in an event entitled 'New Boots and Panto', with Kirsty MacCall at the London Palladium. He died in the March of that year. The Blockheads have continued to perform to keep Ian's songs alive.

Jerimiah Marques

JERIMIAH MARQUES



Jerimiah, or Jerry to his friends, was born in Guyana, on the North-East coast of South America in 1951, and was 'press ganged' as he puts it, by his parents to come to the cold climate of England when he was ten years old. The family lived variously in parts of North-East London locations of Highbury, Dalston, Clapton, and Hackney, where his favourite sport was boxing: a wise choice in East London! His father played the harmonica and sang calypso, before turning into the stereotypical pork pie hat black Mod into R&B and Ska. Jerry also had an English Teacher who encouraged his interests in Ska and Bluebeat music and so he became involved with a group called Amber.

In 1971 Jerry talked his girlfriend, and soon-to-be wife into moving to Braintree where he found shift work easy to get. Although his wife had been successfully employed in secretarial work in London, she found work less easy to come by in Braintree and soon found herself 'trapped' into the domestic role of bringing up two young daughters. Jerry, on the other hand, became involved with a family group of four brothers and a cousin who were all keen to become musicians, and he began playing bongos and hand drums with them. As he was slightly older than the boys he soon became the front man and did half the singing in the band, which they called Invasion, and played Ska and Reggae on mostly homemade instruments at first. Through other Rasta Brothers he also met up with the Wailers in London, and after seeing them play wound up in a recording studio when Bob Marley was making an album. At least one song written in the car on the way to the studio. Jerry also met a drummer in Braintree, called Steve Cutmore, who was to play a part in his musical future.

Invasion lasted about four years before Jerry went his own way and the boys turned towards Rap music. By then he was developing the harmonica skills further that he had picked up from his father. With Steve Cutmore on drums, Malcolm Birch guitar, and brother Nigel Birch on bass and vocals, and Jerry on vocals and harmonica a band emerged called Crack. Their first gig was at Crittalls Social Club supporting a G.I. from the then U.S. Air Base at Wethersfield, called Eddie Jones, a man with London musical connections and a maker of guitars. Crack morphed into Booze and Bloose. They also had 'Cupsy' Cutmore on drums, Steve Saunders on lead and bottleneck guitar. Bob Smith also played lead and rhythm guitar Fergie Fulton was on bass, and John Skelly on guitars and vocals. Pete Nash joined later on keyboards.

The band entered for the Banks's Brewery Best Blues Band competition in 1979. They were so good that the judges moved them from the first heat straight into the final, where they then won the competition. The prize was to cut a vinyl album, supposedly with blues recording legend Mike Vernon, but he turned out to be double booked. The album was however completed in 1990 after a week in the studio down in Eastbourne, and consisted of reworking old blues standards as well as using some of the group's own material. The album, and self-penned title track, was called 'Running Late'. John Skelly was not on the album and the keyboards are credited to Pete Simpson. The other half of the prize was a European Tour, supporting Chuck Berry. By the time Chuck reached Brentwood Sports Centre he seemed fairly washed out and a little uninspired as he jangled his way through his hits in about three quarters of an hour and Duck Walked off stage without an encore, much to the audience's dismay. That really left Booze and Bloose as the shining stars of the show, even though they had performed before Chuck.

At that point in their career all the band members got 'star struck' and wanted to turn professional, all except Jerry, who said "I've got two kids to support, and can't gamble on maybes." So he decided to keep his day job in the building trade. The band got a new singer and carried on for another two years after an eight-year career with Jerry,

but without him they had lost the main attraction. Mike Vernon had said of him that he was the only person he knew who could improve on Howlin' Wolf's version of his song 'Smokestack Lightning'. Praise indeed!

Jerry, of course, didn't give up music, but the split led to another group who they called the Marques Brothers. First of all it was just Malcolm Birch on guitar and Jerry. They felt they didn't need drums as these could be at overpowering levels in sound checks, especially in small venues. In the early '80s they played Glastonbury Fayre. They were later joined by Gippy Mayo, who had been with Dr. Feelgood after Wilko Johnson and a later version of the Yardbirds. When Gyp went back to the Yardbirds he was replaced by Tony Vanes, then Tim Le Grace, and finally Jeff Shaw. The band expanded up to five members for well paid gigs, and after a string of ten gigs in Madrid they morphed once more into the Blue Aces, adding drums again, in the shape of Mike Thornton, while Pete Nash returned on keyboards, sometimes using bass pedals or sometimes the group were blessed with Ian Jennings on a double bass, until Orlando Sheerer took over on that instrument. Big Joe Louie then started on guitar until he was followed by Louis Fielding. Jerry relinquished harmonica to Laurie Garman to concentrate on vocals. Their first C.D. was called 'Chicago Blues' and a second was being mastered at the time of writing and will be called 'Winning Hand'. Booze and Blouse did produce a cassette before 'Running Late' called 'Nobody Knows,' which Jerry preferred to the vinyl's production.

Never standing still, in 2012 Jerry started gigging again with a pre-existing Ska band, called the Ska Gils, for some of their gigs between those of the 'Aces'. And Lenny Henry has discovered him for a Sky T.V. Project called 'Lenny Henry Gets the Blues.' Pete Nash died in 2012 of liver failure and Gippy Mayo in 2014 of cancer. Such is the Rocklifestyle

The Hamsters

THE HAMSTERS



Another of Southend's fine array of Rock bands, the Hamsters formed in 1987 and continued for 25 years, to the day, until 2013 with the main aim of having fun and enjoying themselves playing music. Barry Martin, mainly on guitar, Alan Parish, mainly drums, and Andy Billups, mainly bass, [mainly because they used to swap roles a lot] took a name that the Sex Pistols had used as an alias, and gave themselves all stage names to play the pub and R&B circuit for their own amusement, but proved so popular that that they went professional.

Between 1988 and 1990 they put out six cassettes, as was the mode of the day, and in 1990 a C.D. called 'Electric Hamsterland', with a few vinyl pressings of it for those interested. The title was a parody of Jimi Hendrix's 'Electric Ladyland'. They were not a tribute band but featured interpretations of Hendrix and other acts like Z.Z. Top in their set. They claimed to be one of the highest gigging bands around, and did 4000 shows up to 2002, mostly around the U.K. but some in Europe, and one small U.S. Tour. They got radio exposure on Bill Wyman's Radio 2 documentary, 'Bright Lights, Big City' and did two live shows on Paul Jones Blues Show. In 2003, 4, 5 and 6 they featured in the London Guitar Show. In 2006 -7 they toured with Wilko Johnson and John Otway in the 'Mad, Bad, and Dangerous' tour, and created the music for a budget horror film, 'Stag Night of the Dead', which they called 'Route 666'. They have also supported Status Quo and Albert Collins on tour.

Barry Martin has also played with Dr. Feelgood and the Kursaal Flyers. In one music poll he was voted one of the country's best 100 guitarists. Since the heavy gigging schedule ended he has also turned to writing and contributes to music magazines and documentaries. Alan Parish was a jobbing session drummer before joining the Hamsters, a role he has slid back into. Andy Billups was forced to leave the band in '92 because of developing focal dystonia, but during a two year lay-off taught himself to play again with a customised thumb pick-up. He was replaced during this time by Dave Bronze who joined the Eric Clapton Band after leaving. Albums to their credit are 'Electric Hamsterland' in 1990, 'Hamster Jam' '91, 'The Hamsters' '93, 'Route 666' '95, 'Jimi Hendrix Memorial Concerts' '95-'96', 'Pet Sounds: 10 Years of Rodent Rock' '98, 'Condensed Hamsters' 2000, 'They Live by Night', 2002, and 'Open All Hours' 2004.

While videos to their credit are 'Burnin Vermin' '91, 'Band of Gerbils' '96, 'Verminator' '97, 'Rodents Rock the Reich' '98, 'To Infinity and Beyond' '04, 'The Mad Bad and Dangerous' '07 with Wilko Johnson and John Otway, and 'Curse of the Killer Hamsters' '08.

Depeche Mode/ Yazoo/Erasure



What links these three groups, apart from the use of Synthesisers to create music, is Vince Clarke, and a school which no longer exists. That school was Nicholas School in Basildon, which merged with Laindon School in 1998 to become the James Hornsby School. As the site of Nicholas was where the James Hornsby School grew, there is a plaque in the school hall marking where Depeche Mode played their first gig. The band, over the years, has included Vince Clarke, Andy Fletcher, Martin Gore, Alan Wilder, and Dave Gahan, joined later by Christian Eiger on drums and keyboards from 1997 and Peter Dinklage on keyboards, piano, bass and backing vocals since 1998 for touring, which has followed the release of each new album.

In 1977 Clarke, on vocals, and Fletcher, on bass, were playing together, calling themselves No Romance in China, while Martin Gore played acoustic guitar in a duo, which became a trio called French Look between '78 and '79. By 1980 the two groups merged into a trio called Composition of Sound, with Clarke on vocals and guitar, Gore on keyboards, and Fletcher on bass. Clarke and Fletcher switched to synthesisers in the same year, after being influenced by Kraftwerk, Human League, and OMD. Clarke also heard Dave Gahan singing at a local youth club and asked him to join as vocalist. 'Depeche', like a dispatch, means 'news report' and a 'mode' is a fashion, so 'bringing news of a new fashion', that is what they chose to call themselves, and played their first gig at Nicholas School, where they had been pupils.

'Dreaming of Me' was their first recording in 1980, followed by 'New Life' which reached number 10 in the singles chart and got them a viewing on Top of the Pops. They didn't send demos to record companies but took them personally and insisted they were listened to. Another D.I.Y. tactic included carrying their synths to the TOTP studios by train. Obviously an advantage that their instruments have over the Hammond organs and mellotrons of the 'old guard'. Their third single, 'Just Can't Get Enough' was also a Top Ten hit. The first album, recorded as 'Some Bizarre Album' in 1980 was released as 'Speak and Spell' in 1981. At that time Vince Clarke left the band, destined to team

up with Alison Moyet, another Nicholas girl, in Yazoo. The remaining trio then recorded 'A Broken Frame'. Clarke was replaced by Alan Wilder on keyboards, and drums, creating a line-up that would last for 13 years.

Other records of the '80s included the 'Construction Time Again' album '83; the single 'People are People' which was a Top Ten hit in several countries; a Live video in '85, 'Black Celebration' album in '86, when they were adopted as cult figures by Goths; and 'Music for the Masses' album in '88, appropriately titled, as around that time a U.S. gig at Pasadena Rose Bowl was in front of a 60,000 crowd. By the '90s they were a popular band world wide, producing albums like 'Violator' and 'Songs of Love and Devotion'. Alan Wilder left after the 'Devotional' tour in 1995. 'Ultra', in '97 was a trio album again.

Rock excess also began to show its effects in '97, when Dave Gahan died briefly of a drug overdose in Los Angeles. Although pronounced dead at the scene, he was successfully revived. It was not a suicide attempt but an overdose due to excessive drug use chasing pleasure, and occurred in a social setting. Martin Gore was becoming alcoholic and Andy Fletcher suffering from Depression. So it was time to pull themselves up by the bootstraps and in 1998 they set out on a 'Singles '6 to '98 Tour'. In 2001 it was the 'Exciter' album and tour. 'Playing the Angel' came in 2005, 'Sounds of the Universe' in 2009, 'Delta Machine' in 2013, and another video in 2014. Dave Gahan was fronting a trans-Atlantic band from New York and England called 'Soul Savers' in 2015. This seems to be a project on the side, and Depeche Mode are likely to continue in future incarnations

YAZOO



Or Yaz as they were called in the U.S., were formed in 1981 when Alison Moyet placed an advert in a local Basildon newspaper for people to form a band at the time when Vince Clarke had left Depeche Mode, and it was answered by Vince, to a somewhat bemused Alison, who had known his former band mates by going to the same school at Nicholas Comprehensive. She had been in the same class as Martin Gore and Andy Fletcher. Both Alison and Vince had played in local Punk bands, and she wasn't sure how it would pan out, but was willing to give it a try. Together the duo recorded two albums: 'Upstairs at Eric's', which reached number 2 in the charts, and 'You and Me Both', Clarke on synthesiser and Alison contributing her soulful vocals. They also had four singles that reached the top 3 in the U.K., and one, 'Situation' that was a hit in the States. Alison admitted that she was old fashioned and preferred rhythm and blues and soul singing, and didn't feel a synthesiser was sufficient backing for what she wanted to do, so they split up in 1983. Yazoo had been a good showcase for Alison's talent and she went on to produce the kind of music she excelled at, while Clarke was joined by Andy Bell, and they renamed the duo Erasure, again with Clarke on synth and Bell on vocals.

In 2008, 25 years after their split Yazoo reformed for a nostalgia tour and both their albums were re-released, and again in 2011 they teamed up to do three songs at a music festival.

Erasure

Erasure's first single, 'Who Needs Love Like That' was in 1985. They continued to chart with four more hits. Altogether, between 1986 and 2007 they had 24 consecutive Top 40 singles in the U.K., and three Top Ten hits in the U.S.A. They have sold 25,000,000 albums worldwide, with Bell drawing a large gay fan base to their following



BLUR



BLUR

Lead singer, Damon Albarn was destined for a creative career it seems, as his father was Head of the Art School, or at least Art Department in the North East Essex College of Higher Education, in Colchester after reorganisation. It was also as an Drama and Music student himself at London's Goldsmith's College with fellow Colchester friend Graham Coxon, where they were to meet Alex James. The origins of the group actually begin at Stanway School on the outskirts of Colchester, where Albarn and Coxon were pupils and formed a group called Real Lives with Paul Stevens on guitar and Alastair Havers on bass. Coxon was on drums at that time and Albarn on vocals keyboards and as songwriter. Paul now lives in Chelmsford and was able to fill in a lot of details. He first played with Coxon in '81 and Damon in '83, and recalls how they printed their own promotional material. He arranged the gig lists. When they left the school's 6th Form in '86 the band never formally split up but each went separate ways: Paul to five years at music college, then Marconis to work in electronics which has now morphed with his musical skills to create a practical career in the music business. Havers went to work for a supermarket, while the other two went off to other colleges: Coxon to the Art School at N.E. Essex College of H.E., as above, where Damons' father was Head, and Damon went first to the East 15 Acting School in London followed by Goldsmith's.

At Goldsmith's Albarn was playing first in a group called Circus, which Coxon joined, followed by James, and then they changed their name to Seymour, as who they played their first gig in 1989. Another name change came in 1990 when they were signed to Food Records as Blur, with Dave Rowntree taking the drummers stool, as Coxon moved to guitar.

So with a line-up of Albarn as singer and on keyboards, Graham Coxon on guitar and vocals, Alex James on bass, and Dave Rowntree on drums they embarked on their very successful career on the fringe of the Pop music world.. Their first album, 'Leisure' in 1991 peaked at number 7 in the albums chart. By 1993 they were being identified with the Brit Pop movement of the era with the album 'Modern Life is Rubbish'. The following album, 'Parklife', in 1994 saw them firmly established and sold in multi Platinum numbers. 'The Great Escape' in 1995 was more mainstream and began the hyped up rivalry with 'Oasis' as leaders of Brit Pop. Their clean cut boyish looks and clever musicianship were a big pull for girl fans, while more hard edged and down to earth Oasis had more appeal to the male fans, but the rivalry was stirred up by the press, and Brit Pop in general were really no

more than publicity stunts. All their albums after 'The Great Escape' topped the album charts.

The 1999 album '13' moved more towards gospel and electronic sounds, and in 2003 'Think Tank' was released, but Graham Coxon left the group during the recording sessions. Albarn, independantly of the group, teamed up with James Hewlett for what turned out to be a most profitable side line, the musical cartoons under the name Gorillaz. Hewlett was responsible for the animation and Damon the music. The first Gorillaz album appeared in 2001 and was followed by four others. The electronic experiments continued in Blur, with little significant guitar input, but with Hip-Hop and Afro influences. The group toured without Coxon and the remaining members worked on individual projects, which continue throughout the rest of the groups career. In 2014 Damon Albarn managed to make a musical stage production out of the unlikely subject of Dr. John Dee, Queen Elizabeth I's astrologer and high ranking espionage agent, with code name 007, borrowed by Ian Fleming for James Bond. Dee had his schooling in Chelmsford in what became King Edward the 6th. Grammar School, at a time when it was still run by monks.

In 2009 a reunion with Coxon occurred, leading to singles, compilation albums and a further world tour. In 2012 Blur recieved a Brit Award for Outstanding Contribution to Music. In 2015 'Magic Whip' became their 6th Album Chart topper. Over the years the group have done eight studio albums, five live albums, five compilations, one remix, four E.P.s [extended play short collections], two full length videos, eight promotional singles and thirty music videos. Photo:

Real Lives in Colchester before name change to Blur.