



The Fairies

Essex Rock Music Biograph, The Fairies, John Power.

Although Sandie Shaw, a Dagenham girl, had scored the first hit record for Essex in 1964, in the clubs of the day there was also at that time a thriving Beat and Blues scene in the wake of the Beatles and Rolling Stones. Colchester's finest were best known when they adopted the name 'Fairies', in a 'fingers up' to the nickname applied to the post-Mod generation of longhairs.



The group were originally called 'Dane Stephens and the Deepbeats.' 'Dane's' real name was Dougie Ord, and he was accompanied by Fred Gandy and John Acutt on guitars, 'Wimp' Weaver on bass, and John 'Twink' Alder on drums. You could see them in Youth Clubs or supporting other bands at the lost, lamented, Chelmsford Corn Exchange before the name change and a couple of singles: 'Any Time at All', backed by a then virtually unknown Bob Dylan's 'Don't Think Twice it's Alright', which many people regarded as the 'A' side, in 1964; and 'Get Yourself Home'/'Don't Mind'. Doug Ord sang on the first single but was replaced on 'Get Yourself Home'/'Don't Mind' in 1965 by

Nick Wymer, from Nix Nomads, while Doug spent time in jail for manslaughter after a road accident. When he emerged Doug became a scenery painter for Colchester's Mercury Theatre.



The member of the band who made the biggest impact on the music scene was drummer John Alder, always referred to as 'Twink'. The group's management, which included a couple of Chelmsford lads, also managed the 'Pretty Things' formed by early Rolling Stone Dick Taylor [not to be confused with the later Mick Taylor] and Sidcup Art School mate Phil May. Keith Richard had been another 'Stone' at Sidcup Art School. Dick Finished his Art Studies rather than risk the precarious life of a rock musician. Not the best career move as it turned out! Twink was to join the Pretty Things in 1968 after their third line-up change, and had previously played on their second album 'Get the Picture' in 1965. He stayed until 1969 and played on their [first ever, pre 'the Who's 'Tommy'] rock opera 'S.F.Sorrow'. En route he had been in 'the In Crowd' and 'Tomorrow'. The latter group with singer Keith West had had chart success with 'An Excerpt from a Teenage Opera' with a backing choir which lost the band support from the rock audience, and never resulted in the projected 'opera.' Previously, and more importantly, Tomorrow were the centre of the cyclone which was the emergence of London's psychedelic underground as it emerged into daylight, playing at the launch party for 'International Times' and became regulars at the earliest psychedelic nightclub, the U.F.O. Club in Tottenham Court Road. They released a couple of singles 'My White Bicycle', about the free bicycle system organised by their contemporary Amsterdam Beatniks/Hippies, and 'Revolution', as well as an album. Tomorrow guitarist Steve Howe went on to be a virtuoso with best selling 70's band 'Yes' and then 'Asia.'

Twink was by then well established in the underground bands scene, and apart from the work with the Pretty Things jammed, and recorded with various groups including the 'Deviants' until they morphed into the 'Pink Fairies', where he occupied the drummers stool

full time after line-up changes. He joined ex- Pink Floyd genius and founder Syd Barratt in 'Syd Barratt's Stars' for three gigs before it became clear that Syd's mental health had become so bad from over use of L.S.D. that he could no longer perform live. Twink also played in lesser known bands like the 'Fallen Angels' and the 'Rings', as well as 'Twink and the Fairies' and doing crossover gigs with Hawkwind and Motorhead too. He 'retired' in 1977 and spent many years in Morocco studying the local culture.



The Pretty Things continue to gig into 2015, with Phil and Dick from the original line-up chasing their 70th birthdays. A planned Pink Fairies reunion in 2012 failed to materialise, but a collection of their songs was published in 1998 as 'Mandies and Mescaline at Uncle Harry's'. Unreleased studio recordings and the live recording of Tomorrow's contribution to the 1967 'Christmas on Earth' event headlined by Jimi Hendrix at London's Olympia also appeared in 1998, as the '50 Minute Technicolour Dream', taking its name from another International Times Free Speech benefit gig in 1967 at North London's Alexandra Palace, with a cast of thousands and called 'The Fourteen Hour Technicolour Dream', described by the news of the World as being like the last rites of a dying tribe, but which actually turned out to be the birth of the Hippie Generation. John Lennon attended.

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