

BLUE SUEDE

THE CAMBRIDGE
ROCK MAGAZINE

NEWS

A PILOT EDITION: JULY 1983 : 20p.



INSIDE: THE JOHN PEEL INTERVIEW
THE BLACK CAT IN PICTURES
ANDY METCALFE ON THE FOLK FESTIVAL
ZOOM AT FISHER HALL

INTRODUCTION

The first edition of Cambridge's new rock magazine is a pilot edition and as such remains a fairly primitive experiment in both layout and content. The appearance of the magazine, although not its aims, may therefore have changed by the autumn when fullscale production of a much larger magazine begins. It seemed a good idea, however, to produce a limited edition not only to enable us to learn from our production mistakes, but also to alert the music scene in Cambridge to our existence. Since one of the magazine's prime functions will be to pass on news about bands, gigs and records, it is vital that musicians and gig organisers hear about us in order to inform us of their activities, in order that we can pass on the news to the fans. So please tell us what you are doing - and tell others about us.

Our aims are twofold. Firstly to inform music fans what is going on in the city; and secondly to campaign for more to be going on in the city. The first involves news, reviews and features about local bands and their activities. The second involves not only examining the lack of venues in the city, and the attitude of the city council, the police and the University authorities to the provision of venues; but it also involves looking at the attitudes of the bands and music makers themselves.

It is easy to point to the last page of the magazine where we list all the local bands we have heard of, and marvel at their number and variety, and consequently become enraged at the lack of opportunity to see these bands play live. But does not much of the responsibility lie with the musicians themselves? Shared apathy and bitchy rivalry permeate the Cambridge music scene to the point where divisions between town and gown, or the prejudiced activities of the police and the Council Department of Environmental Health seem not merely inevitable but almost deserved.

60 bands means at least 200 musicians. How many of them turned out to support Pat and John Pollard when the Great Northern was closed by the police? How many of them have even heard of Liz Gard, the Labour councillor who was sacked from the chair of the Recreation and Amenities Committee for standing up for the full conversion of the Corn Exchange. Her personal initiative was largely responsible for the creation of the Black Cat gigs at the Guildhall that we feature on the inside pages. Why should the fans care if the musicians do not?

What do the musicians care about the fans anyway? Not a lot in many cases; and it shows in their performances. Their own ideas of "musical integrity" come before entertainment; the fans are just there to pay, not to be pleased. How surprising then when they refuse to come and pay - and why should they pay to see the many bands who cannot or will not entertain, when there remain some, if only a few, who do? There are bands that deserve to fill halls, and will, because there are hundreds of fans in Cambridge thirsting for good live rock music - if they can find it. It is not apathy amongst the fans that leads to empty halls, it is usually either music they do not want to hear - or gigs that they do not know about. And if they do not know about it, then the apathy is with the band that has not advertised its gig properly.

This of course is where Blue Suede News can help. We are here to serve both musicians and fans by providing a channel for information. If the editor, as a non-musician, inclines towards the interests of the fans, well that is only right and proper in what is known fashionably as a fanzine. Doubtless the many musicians even now casting off their apathy in clouds of wrath to take up their pens and write for us will soon right any imbalance in a venture that must aim above all to bring fans and musicians together. If in the process we can help to bring the music makers together as well, then we might look forward to a better integrated and thus healthier scene altogether.

Blue Suede News will try to do its bit, but its bit will depend on you the reader doing yours. Firstly spread the word about us. Get people to buy us, encourage firms to advertise in us - above all give us your news. And, if you can, contribute something yourself. Anything remotely concerned with the music scene could find its way on to our pages - fashion, films, radio and T.V. reviews etc. etc. Obviously local things come first, but anything interesting and well written will be welcome.

We hope to produce another small pilot edition in August, and then go into full scale production at the beginning of October. See elsewhere in this edition the list of regular features we aim to include - and see if you can suggest any more ideas, all of which will be most welcome.

To: 109, KING ST.
OR: 5, BEAUMONT RD. Tel 248341

NEWS AND REVIEWS

Hondo have a new single out on Sensible Overcoat Records. Side 1 (Heavy) is Fallout, and Side 2 (Light) is Can't Turn You Round.

Ray Northfield has been offered The Peachboys I am told. The mind boggles. Meantime his best boys Tranzista have at last aquired a new bassist - Clive from Flags.

Anyone for Tennis with brass? Jo and John are Out of the Blue and rehearsing. Wimp Records, busily recording The Face, still have time to turn out another Sindy single. "Who's She" is due in September, with video. Watch out T.O.T.P.

2 dates for early August:

5th - Jah Warrior/Tarishi at Fisher Hall

8th - Trux/Rendezvous at the Black Cat

ZOOM AT FISHER HALL

HEATHER STEELE

I first saw Zoom at Strawberry Fair this year and was impressed. Despite the fact that they followed a long line up of bands who have been around for a lot longer than they have, they managed to nudge the already sated crowd into a state of renewed vibrancy with their energetic and rythmic little set. They left an established crowd wanting more.

When they played at Fisher Hall last friday, with no support band, they left their audience in the same mood, but this time the attraction was all their own.

The hall was by no means packed when, at nine-twenty, the trio launched into their first number, but there were entheusiastic cheers as they let rip with an energetic instrumental piece of their own called 'Catch the Bus'. It was a dramatic beginning. The stark green and red lighting and the brickwork surrounds of the performance area suggested youth on the move in the traffic filled city, an urban romantic jive through the seamy streets.

All three members of this band are very young. Their clean cut appearance and their obvious joy at being on a stage at first suggest an innocent, almost demure trio, but the healthy injection of controlled agression into their playing soon convince the listner of a surprising maturity for a band who are playing at only their fifth gig.

Chris Maitland plays drums with such command that it comes as a shock that he doesn't look tall enough to vote. His finely timed relationship with Ben Groenevelt on bass, who also provides all the main vocals, is deeply satisfying. But it is Chris Wong on guitar who has to work hardest to achieve the close knit sound of the ensemble. This guy is very gifted. I wanted to hear more of his dextrous handling of his instrument, at times



uncannily reminiscent of a soaring violin.

There was a slight hiatus when Maitland's foot pedal fell off his sixteen-piece kit, but Wong acted as roadie and by the time the boys had boogied, riffed, zipped, jived and rocked us through a couple of their own numbers the interruption was forgotten.

Zoom's particular weakness is that they try to be too varied. They should trust their own style, apparent in their own works, particularly 'Urban Renewal Avenue' and 'Osmo', and develop it. The mixing throughout was excellent, no easy feat in this acoustic nightmare of a space with all its concrete and glass furnishings.

'High Temperature' was an appropriate penultimate number. By this time the hall was full and everyone was enjoying a fully clothed sauna. The heat was formidable. But when Ben Groenevelt shouted "So you want some more?!", the response was unmistakable. The sweltering boogying crowd definitely wanted more and were still left chanting their disapproval at the band's exit after two encores. Their approval of the evening's entertainment was apparent, however, in their continued applause, long after the band had left the stage.

BLACK CAT CLUB

Cambridge City Council, whatever the the outcome of the Corn Exchange debacle and their dubious ideas about opening up factories for gigs, are nevertheless to be congratulated on their initiative in opening the Guildhall up for local bands to play in. Unfortunately the building is used so frequently that few dates are available and the number of gigs remains disappointingly low. Three have taken place so far - and our photographer JAMES HALL was there to record the events for posterity.



The third Black Cat gig on July 8th featured THE WOBBLY JELLIES (left) with their new girl lead vocalist Emma (above).

Although the gig was not full, the 120 or so that turned up were enthusiastic in their appreciation of one of the best dance bands around.

The Wobblies were supported by RACING HEART (below).

The Black Cat is organised by the Amenities and Recreations Department of the City Council - in particular by the Entertainments Officer Derek Buxton and his assistants Pauline and Liz. Thanks to them therefore from all the rock fans who despaired of our Council.



Thanks also at this point, since there is no room to put it anywhere else, to all those who have contributed to this endeavour. To Andy and Heather for writing; and Jon too for not only writing, but also being a mine of information, and a great encouragement. To Maria for slaving over a hot typewriter after office hours; and particularly to James, as much for pushing me on, as for the hours of work he put into his photographs. The primitive putting together of all this remains my work, with all the many mistakes therein. I hope to learn from them for next time. G.M.M.



The second Black Cat gig was on 22nd June and featured THE GREAT DIVIDE (below - and cover) supported by THE FACE (left).

The Great Divide recently signed to Ensign Records and have been in Spaceward recording studios doing an album in the last few weeks. A single is due to be released soon.

The Face have also been recording, for Wimp Records, and their debut single is due in September.

The first Black Cat gig was on April 14 and featured a double bill of THE WAY UP - formerly The Models (below right) and KATRINA AND THE WAVES.

While The Way Up trudge round the record company offices in London looking for that oft heralded but yet elusive deal, Katrina and the Waves have gone out and recorded an excellent album with the money they have made gigging around the airbases - and the local pubs.



The next Black Cat gig at the Guildhall is on MONDAY AUGUST 8th, and it features TRUX + RENDEVOUS.

Five more dates have been booked for this year, and it is hoped to feature amongst others DOLLY MIXTURE, OUT OF THE EAST, SOMEWHERE IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE, TRANZISTA and HONDO.

Watch this space for further details.

THE FOLK FESTIVAL

ANDY METCALFE
(Once of the Amazing Rustic Folk Band)

Deciding on the bill for a Folk Festival as large and prestigious as Cambridge obviously brings many problems. How, for instance, do you decide what sort of act qualifies to come under this enormous umbrella? Are you trying to provide a financially rewarding bill of big names, or a showcase for British acts, or both, or what? There are many Folk Festivals in this country over the summer which provide for purely traditional tastes and purely British acts, and Ken Wollard has always tried to provide something more varied; but over the last six or seven years the number of up and coming quality acts to appear at Cambridge has gradually diminished.

This year it seems as if the English folk scene has finally kicked its boots off and died. Whether there are good acts around who can't get work, or whether they just do not exist, I could not say; but once again, as before the sixties boom, those running our folk clubs have got stuck in a rut. That boom was brought about because there were musicians around (Boys of the Lough, Swarbrick/Carthy, Ashley Hutchings) who made that music ALIVE to a new generation. It is alive no more. The bills of the last few Cambridge Folk Festivals have reflected this, and this year is no exception. A routine approach to booking also seems to be emerging. Thus last year's Joan Baez is this year's Stephan Grappelli; last year's David Lindley this year's Peter Rowan; last year's Rockin Doopsie this year's Queen Ida; and last year's reformed Lindisfarne is this year's reformed Strawbs.

So a brief word about the main acts. One never knows which one is going to take a particular festival by storm. Maria Muldaur is capable of it if the performances on her first two solo albums are anything to go by; but she is decidedly patchy, and to add to that she has recently been 'born again'. A friend who saw her recently in the States said she would have been good if she stopped preaching long enough to play something. I live in hope that it is her; but if she brings the right musicians and plays 'Midnight at the Oasis' nicely I'm sure we'll all be happy anyway.

The Strawbs. Ah... Well I last saw The Strawbs in '71 or '72 and decided that I didn't really like Dave Cousin's voice - it wasn't just the records. Also, I would have thought booking imitative existing bands preferable to putting an iron lung and pacemaker on a defunct one, giving it a shot of adrenaline and pronouncing it clinically alive. I may yet be proved wrong.

Stephan Grappelli, at the other extreme, is, despite his years, very much alive. My only gripe here is the dreadful choice of backing musicians he inevitably comes up with. There are only two eccoustic jazz guitarists in this country with not only technique but the genuine musical humour to match this superb old master - Diz Dizley and Chris Newman, and sadly neither is in his band. Chris, however, is usually to be seen with Fred Wedlock; which in one sense is a tragic musical waste, and in another, the saving grace of an otherwise tedious act - though I have a soft spot for them as they both come from my native Bristol.

John Fahey is a wonderful guitarist, though I have never seen him live and the one thing which makes or breaks acts at Cambridge is PERSONALITY, so we'll see. Peter Rowan, Flaco Jiminez and Tex Logan will be appearing together, and could either be astonishingly good or totally the reverse. Having played with Peter several times, once on a 20-date tour including Tex, I reckon it depends on a) Peter's mood, b) Flaco's alcoholic content, c) the level of Tex's Redman Chewing tobacco supply and his personal wiring problems - and of course the calibre of the backing musicians.

Brian Patten and Roger McGough? They are poets! What is going on? well I suppose John Cooper Clarke wowed them when he came. Anybody not heard of Richard Digance? Who's next?

Erik Anderson - I heard an album of his once. It was awful. Alistair Anderson is a genius; Roaring Jelly are good at what they do; Cosmetheka less so, and Dave Peabody less so still. And who the hell are Ronnie and Johnny? This year's big breakthrough act? Real cliffhanger isn't it?

THE NIGHT JOHN PEEL CAME TO CAMBRIDGE : A (PROMPTED) MONOLOGUE

John Peel is a 43 year-old father of four, bearded and balding. To look at, he seems an unlikely candidate for Most Popular DJ Awards, yet he has been a consistent winner of music press polls for well in excess of ten years. His late-night show on Radio One is still



Jon Lewin, the Wine Bottle, and Mr. Peel

taken as a measure of credibility by most aspiring musicians - to have featured on Peel's programme is the pinnacle of many bands' achievements. Consequently Mr. Peel's appearance in Cambridge to play records at St. John's College June Event was seen by a great number of persons (myself included) as a chance to make an influential friend, if not actually land one's group a coveted 'session' on the spot.

For the groups actually playing at St. John's that night, this was not, as might have been expected, the case, for as Mr. Peel said, "it's difficult to assess them really, as you don't get a lot of chance to listen - they all had some merit."

How do you select groups to play on your programme? "It is, I suppose, appallingly random. Quite often it's just down to whether or not I like the people; every band you book is representative of 20 or 30 others just as good, so it is arbitrary and unfair, but you can't do it any other way, because if you did choose bands on merit you'd have hundreds on. Either that, or the same five over over and over again. I feel like a bastard a lot of the time, raising people's expectations, particularly at an event like this... there are lots of moral issues involved, and I do feel the responsibility. It's as if I'm opening the door to these groups, only for it to slam in their faces after they'd seen through; and if they'd never seen through, they'd be likely to face life with much more equanimity."

But tonight your presence is showing a lot of people where that door is... "Yes, and I don't really like that. The thing is, I like what I do, and I think there should be lots more people doing it. It is a grave responsibility though,

and I don't like discouraging anyone; I'm just an old softie really. And there is always the chance that your patronising letter saying 'if the job at the bank's still open...' will end up on the sleeve of their Greatest Hits Volume 4."

Obviously Mr. Peel is aware of the wider implications of presenting a radio show to a mass audience. On the question of influence, I asked him if he felt he created, or merely reflected the attitudes of his listeners: "I think I reflect my own attitudes and views, and if others are affected by them in anything other than a fairly superficial way, then that's a pity. Obviously there are things that I believe in, and feel strongly about, and I try (I suppose) to imply these, because I think there is nothing more boring, as Kenny Everett has demonstrated during the election, than DJs hectoring the public on political and social matters.

"People say there must be a philosophy behind a programme that has gone on as long as mine (other than naked opportunism), but if there is, I don't know about it, and would prefer not to. Once you start analysing these things, they always stop working."

Does John Walters (Peel's producer) play a large role in organising the show? "No. His is mainly a social function these days: he refers to himself as my 'earthly representative', as he goes out and attends all the functions while I stay in and do all the work. I choose all the records I play and, as I said, it's often down to whether I like the people involved. I never play anything by The Clash for instance because I met Joe Strummer once and thought he was a twerp. I was at a record company reception for Funkapolitan, quietly drinking the free beer and minding my own business, when Strummer came over and sat down; we got talking about old records until one of his cohorts in those silly Spanish hats came across and said, 'Come on Joe, it's time we were leaving,' and Strummer turned round and said 'Hold on a minute, can't you see

Continued overleaf. Page 7

John Peel CONTD.

I'm working?' It was one of those occasions when I'd have loved to have been a master of the martial arts, and just to have taken his head off with a single blow."

This mention of The Clash seemed a suitable point to introduce the topic of punk, as Peel was after all the first DJ to play 'Anarchy In The UK'... "1976? I didn't realise I'd been bored stiff for the last three years. Then I started playing punk and the average age of my listeners fell from 24 to 16 in about three months; but I remember being surprised that many of the older ones didn't come with me. It reminded me, in a way, of the first time round - 1954/5 - when I was growing up through the birth of rock and roll. Here was a music that was yours; it hadn't, it was the first thing that hadn't, been put in your head by your parents or your teachers, and it was yours. And all the better if they actively disliked it. That's where groups like the Osmonds and the Bay City Rollers - nice boys, nice tunes - actually did the whole thing a disservice."

But what caused the growth of punk, apart from skilful manipulation by Malcolm McLaren? "What had happened is we'd become preoccupied with things that are not central to the core of rock 'n' roll (not an expression that I like to use, but you know what I mean) - in that people had become obsessed, as they're becoming now, with technology and with actual playing ability, which has always been irrelevant. And now I can see this happening again. I quite often get the feeling, 'how much more of this have I got to put up with?' But one of the nice things about popular music is that the so-called experts are often wrong. And the more often they are wrong, the better it is."

Do you feel there's anything important - musically - happening at the moment? "Not really, no. But 'important' implies the wrong things: it's not actually the music that's important, it's the affect that it has on people, and their reaction to it."

So music's not important at the moment, it would seem, in Thatcherist Britain. I asked Mr. Peel if he felt disturbed by the absence of any leading lights on the musical stage: "I don't think so; I quite like the idea of everything being low-key."

That does seem to be reflected in the diversity of music you play on your programme. "I often get accused of abandoning groups once they get famous,

of ignoring their records; that's not true. Almost always a group's good ideas are put into their first two or three records. After that, they become increasingly restricted by the requirements of their audience, who want the same noise and can't afford to speculate, and have their favourite bands alter radically. Change is a dangerous commodity inside the record business too: if you spend two years and millions of dollars getting a bunch of twerps like Journey off the ground, you can't afford to have people turn round and not like Journey anymore. You have to keep them in people's minds, and on the radio. With this low-key state it's easier for people like me to reflect what's actually happening, rather than playing the same groups or just sticking to totally obscure German imports."

Do you have any plans for the future? "I just want to carry on. I may appear to have a niche at the BBC, but it's a very uncomfortable niche. I'm only on 9 months contract with no sickness benefit or holiday pay. That's why I do these gigs, for the money, for security. The thing is, the BBC see me as Radio One's Ken Livingstone, the voice of the 17 year-old holigan on the street, which as you can see is just a bit ludicrous. I'm just a fuzzy old dear."

The above conversation was reduced from 90 minutes I spent with Mr. Peel outside Crusts' Wine Bar. He was pleasant, helpful, and very talkative in a circumlocutious way; he obviously enjoys holding court to willing listeners - an obvious talent for a DJ. Of the bands that played that night, his stated preference was for The Face, although The Great Divide were given an honourable mention as being a 'Kid Jensen band', and probably destined for 'notoriety'. The funny thing was, Peel was taller than I thought he'd be. **JON LEWIN**

AND IN CONCLUSION...

Those of you good enough to have read us all the way through will be asking yourselves where this great list of bands has got to. Well we thought you would probably prefer the wit and wisdom of Mr. Peel in full to a boring set of lists. We do intend, however, to devote a page in future issues to lists of not only bands (at the last count nearer 70 than 60!) but also of Hirers of P.A. Equipment, Lighting Rigs, Video Cameras and all the other paraphernalia required to go out and set up a gig. If you are in these businesses, then let us know.