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TALES FROM THE

UG 01

UNDERGROUND

(CLARK/HENDERSON)

THE HISTORY OF THE INDEPENDENT

45

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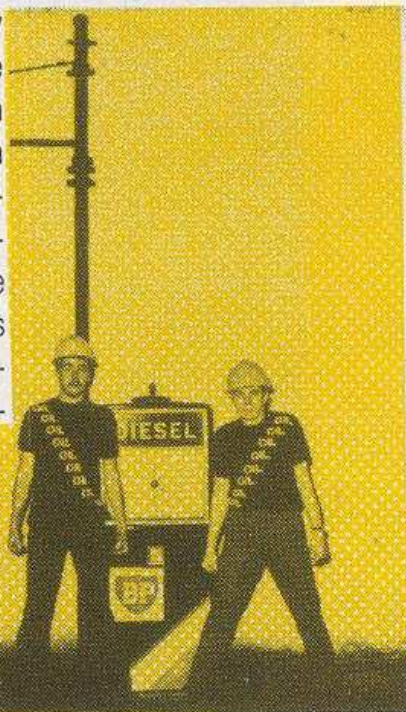
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GREAT "NEW WAVE" SINGLES THAT HAVE DISAPPEARED BUT ARE REALLY BRILL

- | | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Don't Split It | Subway Sect | Braik |
| 2 | Four Hours | Clock DVA | Fetish |
| 3 | Hungry So Angry | Medium Medium | Cherry Red |
| 4 | Edward Fox | Smack | Pinnacle Records |
| 5 | Clothes Of Pride | Stars Of Heaven | Hotwire |
| 6 | Parry Thomas | The Tea Set | Waldo's |
| 7 | Do The Chud/Big In Japan | The Chuddy Nuddies/Big in Japan | Eric's |
| 8 | Private Plane | Thomas Leer | Company/Oblique |
| 9 | Iggy Pop's Jacket | Those Naughty Lumps | Zoo |
| 10 | Dance This House Down | The Passmore Sisters | Sharp |
| 11 | The EP | Number Four Joy Street | Golden Pathway |
| 12 | Diversion | The Twilight Zonerz | Zip |
| 13 | Time Goes By So Slow | The Distractions | Factory |
| 14 | Southern Fields | Rosemary's Children | EI |
| 15 | Strawberries Are Growing In My Garden | The Dentists | Spruck |
| 16 | World At My Shoes | The Great Outdoors | Upright |
| 17 | Meat Or Sheep May Safely Braise | The Rotovators | Rotovator |
| 18 | Read About Seymour | Swell Maps | Rather |
| 19 | Somebody's Gonna Get Hurt | His Latest Flame | Go Discs |
| 20 | 6,000 Crazy | Spizz Oil | Rough Trade |
| 21 | Who Is Innocent? | The Out | Rabid |
| 22 | Cyclotron Fauvist Music | Die Electric Eels | Rough Trade |
| 23 | Someone Different | Glass Torpedoes | Teen Beat |
| 24 | Europeans | Europeans | Heartbeat |
| 25 | What I Want | The Donkeys | Rhesus |
| 26 | We Love Malcolm | The O Level | King's Road |
| 27 | In The Army | Blah Blah Blah | Absurd |
| 28 | The Men From Banana Islands Whose Stupid Ideas Never
Caught On In The Western World As We Know It | The Freshies | Razz |
| 29 | Escalator | The Stingrays | Big Beat |
| 30 | King Midas In Reverse | DCL Electronic | Reflex |

○In the hogwash and confusion of '77 when safety pins became jewellery, gossip became news and the rock press was given a kind of spasm-inducing mouth to mouth, the independent label syndrome was born in a bedroom just south of the north. There were no particular reasons, plenty of specialist patrons were suggesting the idea, bootlegs were *hip* and both reggae and soul were undergoing a pressing boom that was lining the pockets of the few who'd secured the addresses of studios, cutting rooms, sleeve printers, and record pressing plants.



Pose: Spizz & Pete Petrol pump it up



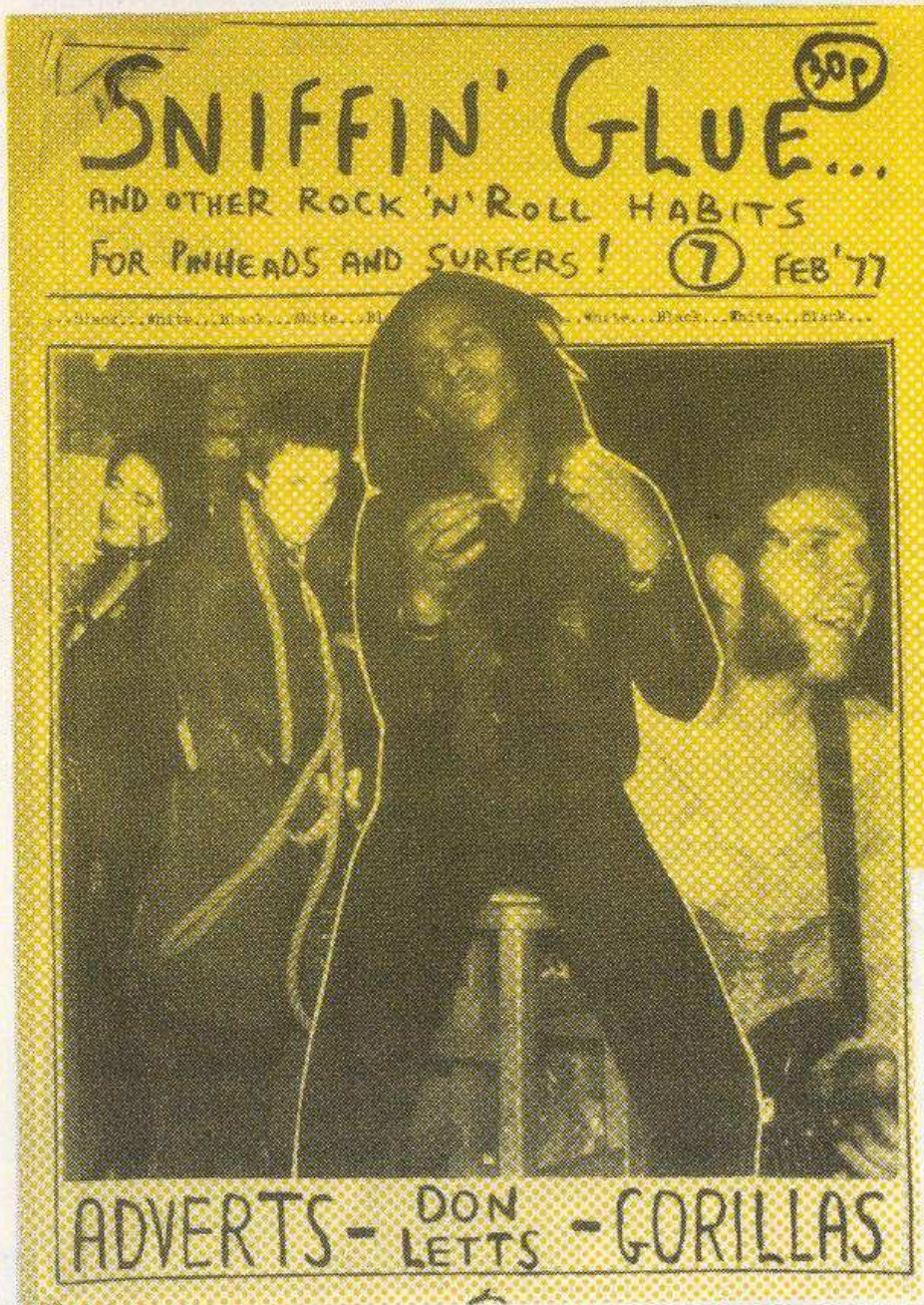
Pose: Vic Godard in early sect daze

○With the birth of punk, the fanzine, the get up and go regime entered the garage, turned the exhaust on full and didn't come out till they were blasted. Though purists might reckon that the reggae obscurists, Island and eventually Virgin were the first "independent" labels it wasn't till the birth of Stiff, Chiswick and eventually Rough Trade and its many bastard sons that the independent network that we know and love today was panting its first howling breaths.

The revolution would not be televised, but the "scene" soon produced its heroes and the bigger companies snapped them up, cleaned them up where necessary and taught them that all important business sense.

Dave Henderson clears away the cobwebs and attempts to draw some kind of parallel between the independent label explosion of '76-'78 and the current resurgence and general profile raising that is wending its way through the independent network.

As it is now, as it was then, the A&R departments are hounding the smaller labels, but this time the independent businessman has a bit more brainpower, a tatty Filofax substitute and a huge 'phone bill. Let battle commence.



Pose: The Bible of the Beat, then...

In the autumn of 1978, the independent label boom was making glorious headway. Into the valley of the overdraft, and VAT added later, a plethora of strangely named companies were registering as business partnerships, opening bank accounts and generally living on credit of 30 days for everything from artwork and pressing, to sleeve manufacture

The smaller operations, like sleeve and label printers Delga, and the pressing plants at places like Island, were soon to get into some sticky financial problems through many of the labels' inability to juggle a calculator, but the spirit of adventure was rife and some of those earlier 45s made enough money for even more strange sounding outfits to emerge

Skimming through Zig Zag's Small Label Catalogue for '78, which came in at a measly 28 pages and covered everything that lived and breathed at that juncture, there are some long forgotten luminaries from that great no fixed abode in the sky (as well as some heady overtures that later would develop into cash certs for the larger companies)

I mean, who can forget **High Society's** Three Hippies In A Gas Chamber on AFC, **The Art Attacks' I'm A Dalek** on Albatross (a rousing gruff outburst with lead crooning from **Savage Pencil**, which changes hands for a fiver these days), **The Angelic Upstarts'** controversial The Murder Of Little Towers on their own Angelic Upstarts label, **Joy Division's** very valuable first 12 inch, The Ideal For Living EP on Anonymous or Enigma, **The Lurkers'** early outbursts and a thinly bleached **Gary Numan as Tubeway Army** on Beggars Banquet. There was **Jonathan Richman** and other bezerk Bezerkley tykes from the States, the manic violin-driven punk of **Bethnal** . . . and we're still only up to page four. It seemed every town had its fave band and every would-be entrepreneur was calling collect to find out if he could press 1,000 records and charge it to Access

It was Stiff who really captured the initial independent spirit and somehow an endless string of post punk songsmiths emerged from the death throes of pub rock to give the label a reputation that looked ever profitable. Their first 10 records might have been a little hit and miss — with contributions from **Nick Lowe** (later to be cred fare in coffee table position), **The Pink Fairies** (cult rockers with interesting hairstyles for the period) **Roogalator** (a four piece revolving around simple pop and interesting keyboards who signed to Virgin and disappeared after Love And The Single Girl), **The Tyla Gang** (Sean Tyla's rockin' boogie bozos), **Lew Lewis** (a harmonica-totin' Canvey blues person), **The Damned** (pub rockers on speed and dandruff), **Richard Hell** (ex **Heartbreaker, Television**), **Plummet Airlines** (the country rock revival that came too soon) and **Motorhead** (hmm).



Number 11, however, was the start of the label's big boom with **Elvis Costello's** Less Than Zero. Who would have thought that this spotty, bespectacled non-image would have captured the hearts of a confused punk generation who were discovering puberty through **Johnny Rotten's Pistols** departure (and scraping the egg off their collective faces as **McLaren** revealed it was all a scam)? Well, they had *me* fooled

Hot on Costello's heels came **Wreckless Eric** and **Ian Dury** in a return to raucous vaudeville good time music. The Stiff nationwide tour coupled Costello, Dury, Eric and Nick Lowe with ex-**Pink Fairy Larry Wallis** in a beery show of bravado. No sooner had it returned than the focus of attention switched to Akron, Ohio, of all places, and the Stiff team unleashed the impressive **Devo** (later to sign to Virgin), **Rachel Sweet, Jane Aire And The Belvederes** (also later to sign to Virgin) while Mercury picked up on Cleveland, Ohio's **Pere Ubu**, who Stiff had passed upon

During the past eight years the fall and rise, rise and fall of Stiff has seen them rubbing shoulders with **The Members** (they released their first single Solitary Confinement before signing to Virgin), **Madness** (scooped from 2-Tone in their prime and motivators of some of the best things in video), **The Yachts** (whose **Henry Priestman** later became an **It's Immaterial** and more recently resurfaced on keyboards with **The Christians**), **The Belle Stars**

(gak), **Tenpole Tudor** (hooray) and **Any Trouble** (wah). You see, it's not easy picking a winner

Around the same time as Stiff were slipping into gear, **Ted Carroll's** Rock On record stall became a lucrative empire fuelled on discarded **Dylan** EPs, obscure oddities and the kind of collectables that most vinyl junkies would give their Dansette for. Rock On relocated to a shop in Kentish Town Road beside Camden Town tube and at the drop of a stylus shop regulars turned out to be would-be pop personalities in a time when the legendary "get up and do it" attitude still ruled the roost. Initial releases on Chiswick varied from obscure rockabilly classics that were changing hands for vast sums plus anything from the bastard sons of rock 'n' roll to the tempered also-ran commerciality of acts that could almost make it to the radio but were being dubbed "new wave" by pundits who didn't want to soil their hands with punk

The catalogue was erratic in those days. **Vince Taylor And The Playboys** kept the quiphola crew happy, while **The Gorillas** played latter day r 'n' b, never really catching their manic on-stage neo-**Hendrix-meets-Slade** antics. More palatable, perhaps, were the restrained tones of **The Radio Stars**, the Irish punk of **The Radiators From Space**, **Johnny And The Self Abusers** (who would go on to become **Jim Kerr And The Simple Mind Abusers**), the silky sweet rockabilly authentication of **Whirlwind**, the extrovert **Johnny Moped**, **Strummer**-powered **101'ers** and the omnipresent **Motorhead**

Since those early days, the Chiswick catalogue has expanded to cover a vast array of styles and genres with a collection of well stocked rosters including Ace (everything from the **Elvis Presley** Interview Tapes LP through to **Frankie Ford's** Sea Cruise album, **BB King** on CD and more), Kent (soul compilations spanning the late '50s through to the mid '70s, with special collections of **Ike And Tina Turner**, **The Impressions**, **Maxine Brown**, **Bobby Bland** and **Tyrone Davis**), Big Beat (mixing current sounds as diverse as **The Cramps**, **The Stingrays**, **The Del-Monas**, **The Damned** and **Shark Taboo**), Globestyle (featuring **3 Mustaphas 3**, accordion music from the far flung corners of the world and general ethnic madness), Boplicity (jazz of all types), Del Rio (catering for a resurgence of interest in roots country music), Off Beat, Impact, Crown, Contemporary and Cascade

Over recent years the Ace axis and their obvious success, through coupling re-issues with new product, new mixes, previously unobtainable and very rare material, has been taken up by others too. From Demon, mixed among current issues by US outfits like **The Connells** and UK funsters **That Pet-**

rol Emotion, they have a US label, Zippo, working on acts like **Green On Red**, **Dream Syndicate** and **The Rain Parade**, plus a massive re-issues programme on Edsel which touches all corners from **Grateful Dead**, **The Paul Butterfield Blues Band**, **Love**, **Earth Opera** and **Van Dyke Parks**. There is also currently healthy activity with soul repackages from Charly (who also cover r 'n' b and rock 'n' roll), See For Miles (whose catalogue covers diverse people from **Andrew Loog Oldham** to **The Troggs**) and Bam Caruso (who mix the current wave of psychedelic music with classic '60s material from the vaults of Decca, EMI or wherever)

So, how can these small labels manage to access big labels' catalogues? Well, with such small runs of product and sales building over a long period rather than in one initial rush it makes it impractical for the larger labels to concentrate their efforts on such schedules and, with the exception of Stateside, most have opted to let specialists like Ace, Bam Caruso, See For Miles etc work their material and pick up a royalty on the tracks



YOUNG MAN SEEKS AN INTERESTING JOB

● With the Stiffs and suchlike taking the initiative, it wasn't long before every nook and cranny was fostering their pet project. Record shops were a prime point of activity (especially those who couldn't fake admittance or a backstage pass to the clubs — save **Eater** whose Roxy exploits smacked of Dickensian irony). In the Midlands, Graduate picked out the local punky reggae combo — a multi-racial conglomerate called **UB40** — whose stance and politics were sound (and whose music wasn't far behind) ● Just prior to that outburst, the major labels were revolving in ever-decreasing circles as eastenders Small Wonder and Notting Hillbillies Rough Trade began to grab some of the scruffy elements of the *new wave*. **The Beatles'** clean cut mop top image was a thing of the past (until about a year later that is, when power pop and **The Pleasers** raised their pimply brow) ● Rough Trade had started distributing the smaller labels through the back of their shop (as had Small Wonder), both were operating mail order services and both were inundated with potential Pistols, left field weirdos and commercial comrades all bursting to introduce their talents to plastic ● Rough Trade had kicked off with the Iggy influenced guitar barrage of the drum machine powered French outfit **Metal Urbain** on Paris Maquis, but, in truly international style, they followed it with discs from **Mister Bassie**, **Cabaret Voltaire**, **Stiff Little Fingers**, **Subway Sect**, **Spizz Oil** and **The Angelic Upstarts**. Small Wonder's dive into the market was a little more heads down and straight forward and they introduced the world to **Puncture**, **Zeros**, **The Carpettes**, **Leyton Buzzards** and **The Cravats** in quick succession. They were soon to diversify, however, with releases from **Bauhaus**, **The Cure**, **Crass** and **Patrik Fitzgerald**, while Rough Trade kept everyone guessing about policy with a wide range of delights varying from **The Monochrome Set** to **The Raincoats**, **The Blue Orchids** to **Delta Five** and **Red Crayola** to **Robert Wyatt**. (And the variation in their product is still present.)



The Monochrome Set:

still distorted



The fab Cabs' second 45



Raincoats' Fairytale sleeve



Crass say Small is beautiful

NEXT

Almost immediately the first signs of confusion about independent availability began. It was hard enough to track down some of the labels, difficult to read about releases and sometimes it was impossible to obtain some of the more limited pressings. (At this point we were a long way from the Cartel distribution network and major league success for *any* band on a small label.)

Deptford Fun City's debut fuelled by *Sniffin' Glue* enthusiasm brought the scene into perspective and also introduced 12,000 readers to some new sounds through the DFC pressing of **Squeeze** and *SG* editor **Mark P's** band **Alternative TV**. Sister labels Illegal (**The Police**) and Step Forward (**The Cortinas**, **Chelsea** and **The Fall**) further coloured the picture, but it was the real obscurity, that one record only label, that often made the tackiest, finniest or most desirable discs.

Scotland's Sensible label introduced the world to **Fay Fife** and **The Rezillos** on their *Can't Stand My Baby*; New Hormones offered the world **The Buzzcocks**; Braik (managed by **Bernie Rhodes**) came up with **Subway Sect**; Rabid from Manchester had **Ed Banger And The Nosebleeds**, **Slaughter And The Dogs** and **John Cooper Clarke**, while Raw Records had a riot of confusing styles including **The Killjoys** (later to become **Dexy's**), **The Users**, **The Soft Boys**, **Some Chicken**, **Acme Sewage Co** and more.

In Ireland, the Good Vibrations label was already in the market for producing quality pop and they displayed this with cuts from **The Undertones**, **Protex** and **X-Dreamysts**. To press the point home even further, the label also compiled a limited edition double 7 inch set called *Battle Of The Bands* with a side apiece from **Rudi**, **Spider**, **Outcasts** and **Idiots**.

The formula continued with Zoo (**The Teardrop Explodes**, **Bunnymen**); Industrial (**Throbbing Gristle**); Safari (**Wayne County**, **Toyah**); and The Label (**Eater**, **Bombers**). The music was, obviously, varied, it was always dynamic and hugely saleable.



The Undertones (with Feargie on the left)

THREE STEPS FORWARD

and more to come...

Step Forward Records

Three from Step Forward

BATTLE OF THE BANDS

RUDI
OUTCASTS
IDIOTS
SPIDER

£2.00

Good Vibrations: groovy sounds

GO FOR YOUR LAYOUT SHEET

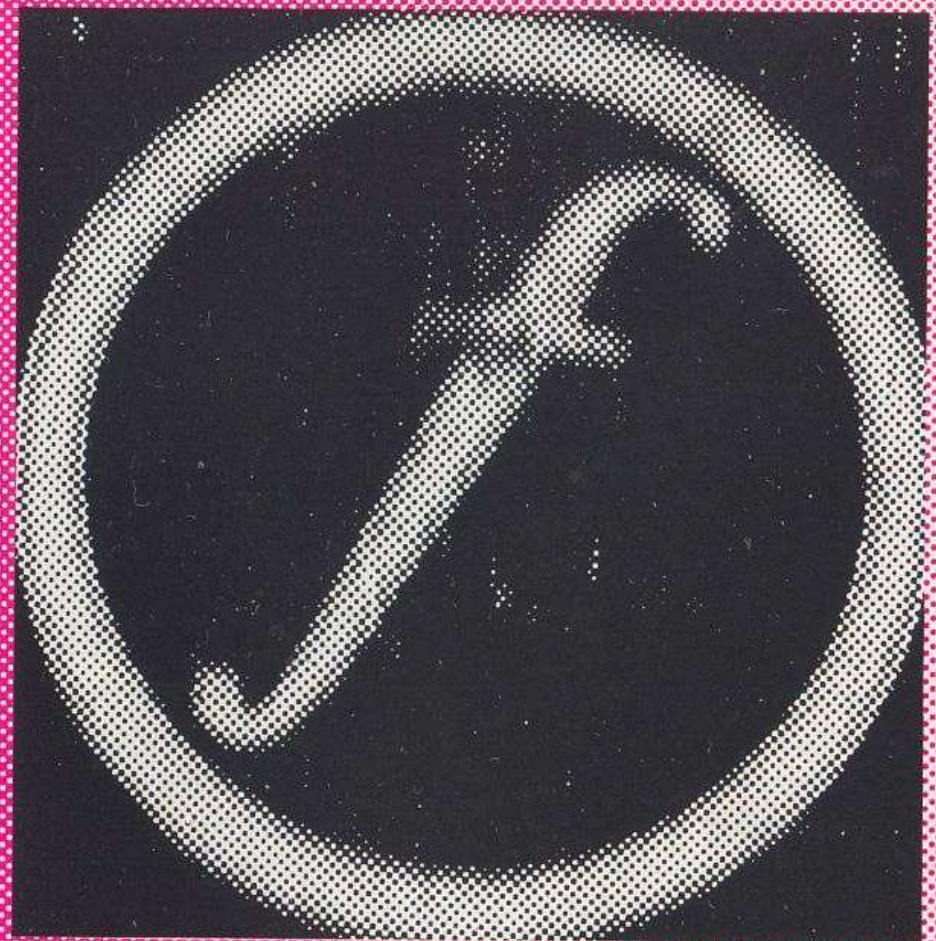
With more and more labels arriving on the over populated counter something had to give. There were just too many singles and inevitably labels, printers, pressing plants and record stores ended up going under. *Image* had always been an individualistic point within the independent world and, around the turn of the '80s, it became even more plain that it was the labels who'd developed their own distinct look and cult following who were going to survive (as well as prompting new labels that the look of their discs was just as important as the sound).

MUTE

Set up by **Daniel Miller**, the label's first release presented the world in an electronic box. Miller, thinly disguised as **The Normal**, did the ultimate in noise generation disco on *TVOD/Warm Leatherette* (later covered by **Grace Jones**). Messy and perfectly aggressive, the Mute stock Letraset graphics, follow ups by uncomfortable bed partners **Non**, **Pad Gadget**, **Depeche Mode** and **Smegma**, couldn't have even hinted at the mega-Mode wave which was to follow. Electronic disco took off, and the label's future was secure when Depeche Mode hit the charts.

Since that deserved success, Mute have been able to take more risks with **Liaisons Dangereuses**, **Einsturzende Neubauten**, develop talent (**Nick Cave**) provide a service (re-releases of the old **Throbbing Gristle** material) and managed to break several new **Vince Clark** projects from **The Assembly** (with **Feargal Sharkey**) and **Yazoo** to **Erasure**. All this with an electronic/secondhand computer image... not bad, huh?

„the normal“



FACTORY

With house designer **Peter Saville** in tow from the early days at Factory, the label's cult following was rapidly increased through a series of ingenious graphic techniques, the odd Futurist copy and a style of clinical — almost architectural — design that devotees devoured with rampant delight. Through a post-industrial mêlée of angled lines, subtle colours and traced overlays introduced a kind of coffee-table-meets-library-bookshelf collectability. Each individual act was presented with its own unique image and there've been many copyists. A look at any Factory arty-fact — from **A Certain Ratio**, **Section 25**, **New Order**, **The Names**, **Joy Division**, **Durutti Column** — will soon bring that home.

FAST

With such a wide variation in musical style on the initial Fast roster it's quite surprising that the label's post-kitsch, scratch graphics managed to pull all the corners together. A label born in the heyday of '78, it soon disappeared with the majority of its patrons moving to the big league. Later exploits seemed to go under the Pop Aural monicker and included releases from **The Fire Engines**.

First there was **The Human League**, **Gang Of Four**, **2.3**, **The Scars** and **The Mekans**, all gloriously bolshie, noisy and putting adventure into music. The label even offered the first disc as magazine idea with their Earcom series which featured musical contributions, over three volumes, from forces as diverse as **Joy Division**, **Thursdays**, **The Prats**, **DAF**, **Stupid Babies**, **Noh Mercy** and more.

POSTCARD

As a kind of muted reaction to the techno design ice age around them, the Postcard label — with its close knit family of acts — **Orange Juice**, **Josef K**, **The Go Betweens** and **Aztec Camera** — totally discarded the *over-designed* threat by introducing sketchily penned cats, badly drawn Scots people and general smoky beermat type imagery to their sleeves and labels.

Whether it had been a positive move to alter the flow of slicko Brit art isn't too clear, but a host of third generation Josef K and Orange Juice grandchildren in sound have a distinct regard for the bizarre in their sleeve artwork and general presentation.



4AD

A late starter, compared to Fast and Mute, 4AD is the brainchild of **Ivo** and shares space in South London with Beggars Banquet. Masterfully designed sleeves, postcards and general paraphernalia (courtesy of **23 Envelope**) have given the label a moody, broody image that's perfect for the likes of label faves **The Cocteau Twins** and **This Mortal Coil**. Others wrapped and distinctive in 4AD finery include **Colourbox**, **Dead Can Dance** and **Dif Juz** for whom 23 Envelope have created personal, quite different images while still keeping within the label guidelines.

In something of a show of design strength, 4AD released a set of postcards featuring the work of 23 Envelope. It was such a huge success that the label's first release for '87 is a set of 12 postcards featuring their work.

★One of the first noted 45s to emerge from the home-made department came from **The Desperate Bicycles**. Not musically aligned to the punk/new wave movement (in fact not musically in sympathy with very much at all), the group's Smokescreen is something of a **Van Gogh** among vinyl valiants.

★For the record, they had four releases all on their own *Refill Records* from East London. They were Smokescreen (RR 1), The Medium Was Tedium (RR 2), New Cross New Cross (RR 3) and Occupied Territory (RR 4).

ABSOLUTELY TOTALLY PRETENTIOUS RARE & OBSCURE RECORDS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

- 1 IT'S A MAN'S MAN'S MAN'S WORLD
Jerri Ross
Local Anaesthetic **307028** (1983)
- 2 AIRSHIP TO BALI
Ohm
OHM 1 (1979)
- 3 WE DID IT AGAIN
The Modernaires
Illuminated
ILL 4 (1981)
- 4 AFTER DINNER EP
After Dinner
Recommended
MB 001 (1982)
- 5 CAN'T LOOK STRAIGHT
Smegma
Mute
MUTE 007 (1980)
- 6 PARTS OF MY BODY
General Strike
Canal
CANAL 01 (1979)
- 7 MOTOR CITY
Age Of Chance
Riot Bible
RIOT 1 (1985)
- 8 DON'T WANT LOVE
Ten Foot Faces
Independent Projects
IP 017 (1985)
- 9 MY LADY OWNS A FALLE OUT ZONE
Les Zarjazz
Creation
CRE 014 (1985)
- 10 GO COMMERCIAL
The Space Negros
Arf Arf
AA 001 (1980)
- 11 SONGS IN PRAISE OF THE REVOLUTION
Camp Sophisto
Pure Freude
PF 16 CK 8 (1982)
- 12 MARY BELL
Monte Cazazza
Industrial
IR 0010 (1980)
- 13 CUBIST POP MANIFESTO
Big Flame
Ron Johnson
ZRON 13 (1987)
- 14 LOVE LIES LIMP
Alternative TV
Deptford Fun City
DFC 05 (1978)
- 15 THESE FLOORS ARE SMOOTH
The Deep Freeze Mice
Cordelia
ERICAT 002 (1985)
- 16 THE SOUNDTRACK RECORDING OF "BRIDGE"
Independent Projects
IP 010 (1980)
- 17 STORY OF BOGSHED
Bogshed
Shellfish
SHELLFISH 1 (1986) B side
- 18 LOS NINOS DEL PARQUE
Liaisons Dangereuses
Mute
MUTE 023 (1982)
- 19 REINE AFRICAINE
DDAA
Illusion Production
IP 005 (1980)
- 20 KIDNAPPING
Bene Gesserit
Grafika Discs
F13 (1982)

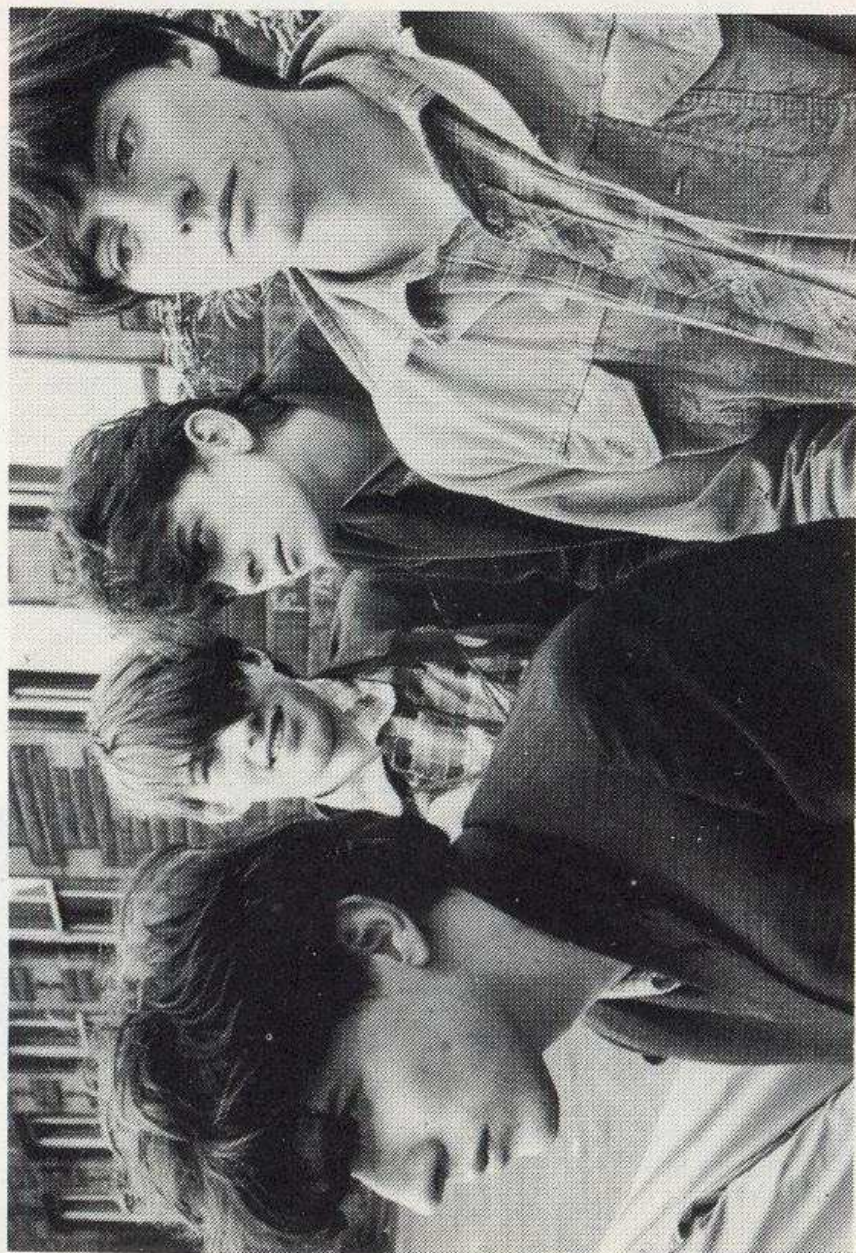
Actually, these 20 delicacies are a standard test for people with amnesia. Do you recognise any of these titles? Have you been in the vicinity when one of these underground overtures has been performed? What were you doing during the years mentioned? All this, and, more...

●Yes, there actually was a label called **Underground Records** back in '78. Their first, and only traceable 45, came from **The Jerks** and was called *Get Your Woofin' Dog Off Me*.

● **Edwyn Collins's journey into immortality started in the wee small hours with Alan Horne's Postcard label. Eventually his brainchild and whipping post, Orange Juice, were snapped up by Polydor. Horne went onto some rather unimpressive outings on a new label, Swamplands, and the Scottish scene seems only recently to be returning to some semblance of normality.**

Julian Henry's love of pure pop was born with Orange Juice and their many latterday cousins and it was with some trepidation that he took his four prized Postcard 45s to the house of Collins to gain Edwyn's wit and wisdom on the sides in retrospect.

● **That was just part of the story. Collins claimed to have a hangover and his stereo was broken, but he warmed to the task and revealed a few other secrets about the Postcard label and some of the records that nearly got released . . .**



S. Daly E. Collins D. McClymont J. Kirk

Felicity, live version "The first Orange Juice record was actually a flexi-disc that Malcolm Ross recorded on a tape recorder, and was of a gig we were doing in Cheviots Row in Edinburgh. We had this idea to start a fanzine called *Strawberry Switchblade* (named after one of James Kirk's songs) and intended to give the flexi away with it. The fanzine never appeared because it was shit."

Falling And Laughing "We recorded this in eight hours in a small 8-track in Paisley, and when we finished it, we felt, well, that it was rather good. The reason it sounds a bit out of tune is because we couldn't afford a guitar tuner; anyway, James was convinced that he had perfect pitch, so it's understandable that the tuning was sometimes a bit out." ● "We all came down to London to see Rough Trade and John Peel. Alan marched into the foyer in Broadcasting House and just demanded to see him. Alan is a bit arrogant, and when Peel appeared he just said to him, 'All these Liverpool groups you're playing are shit, Glasgow is the next place where it's going to happen!' Then we heard Peel on the air saying how he'd just been confronted by a 'truculent youth'! who said that the Liverpool thing was over, and then he proceeded to play Echo And The Bunnymen. Peel didn't like our record, he only played it once."

Blue Boy "Once we'd recorded everything, Alan and I went down to London to try and arrange a deal for Postcard through Rough Trade, but when we got in to see Geoff Travis he told us that the songs fell in between punk and professional pop and that he didn't think Rough Trade could become involved. We left the offices very downhearted and Alan seemed to go into a crazed depression and started wandering about in the middle of the road saying, 'Let them run me over, let them kill me'. I said, 'Look Alan, give me the masters, I'll phone around some of the major record companies and see if I can get us a deal that way'. So Alan said, 'Take the masters. Betray me. But that'll cost you £25,000'. He was insane ● "Anyway, in the meantime Dave McCulloch from *Sounds* had written a big double page spread on Postcard, and when Geoff Travis saw it he miraculously changed his mind! So we got our deal with Rough Trade."

Simply Thrilled Honey "I remember that we were getting phenomenally good press at this time, and when we went on tour supporting The Undertones things were starting to go well. There were major record labels hovering about, but we didn't really see any point in signing then" ● "The Postcard office up at 185 Princes Street was getting hundreds of tapes sent in by all the would-be hopefuls at that stage, and there were always the same characters hanging around — Hodgy from The Bluebells, the guys from Love And Money, and Lloyd Cole who, incidentally, was in a mod group at the time. Hodgy was always trying to impress Alan in the hope that they'd get signed up, but Alan would just play him along. Also I think that The Bluebells never joined Postcard due to pressure from Josef K and ourselves, we thought they were shit."

Pour Old Soul "We thought this was a bit like a Chic song, you can imagine how moronic we were. I really saw it as a contender, and there were arguments with Rough Trade over whether or not we should use a strike force to help promote it; they had this hippy mentality and said no, but Alan was very ruthless and had no scruples about bribery or corruption. It ended up selling about 20,000 copies I think" ● "Alan was still behaving very eccentrically. He would go around with huge cat's whiskers painted on his face saying, 'I'm catman and I make purrrfect records'."

Wan Light "This was set to become our sixth single but it never actually came out since we decided to make the move to a major company. It was a mistake in retrospect, as we had these huge expectations from Polydor and nothing actually seemed to happen. Postcard now seems to be like a hobby that we became obsessive about — you would have to be either very foolish or very generous to call it a business. My own motivation has never been money though, and I feel that if we'd stayed in the independent sector of the market we would have become much more important. We were naive then, and were stupidly tempted by a major label."

With the current cost of Orange Juice Postcard 45s well into double figures, *Underground* has managed to put together a meagre £6.29 to buy a copy of Orange Juice's, sort of, Greatest Hits, In A Nutshell. Plus, we got Edwyn to scribble some message or other on it. So, the album, now defaced, which features a few of the tracks that Edwyn's been talking about (and some later Polydor things) can be yours for a mere postcard with the correct answer to the following OJ related questions

● **1 Name the three other bands that were on the original Postcard label** ● **2 Label boss Alan Horne went on to set up a second label in conjunction with London, what was it called?** ● Answers to O

McJuice/*Underground* Keyboard Mail Room Ltd, Unit 5, Seager Bldgs, Brookmill Rd, London SE8 before April 3.



- Alan Horne would go around with huge cat's whiskers painted on his face saying, 'I'm catman and I make purrrfect records' -

- 1 **CHANCE MEETING** Josef K Postcard 81 5
- 2 **SECONDS TOO LATE** Cabaret Voltaire Rough Trade RT 060
- 3 **PILLAR TO POST** Aztec Camera Rough Trade RT 112
- 4 **GO OUT AND GET 'EM BOY** The Wedding Present City Slang CSL 001
- 5 **ALMOST PRAYED** The Weather Prophets Creation CRE 029
- 6 **MANIC DEPRESSION** The Linkmen Kitchenware SK17 B side
- 7 **SHE IS BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL** The Pop Group Radar ADA 29
- 8 **CRAFTY FAG** The Nightingales Ink INK 71
- 9 **BLUEBOY** Orange Juice Postcard 80 2
- 10 **AMBITION** Subway Sect Rough Trade RT 07
- 11 **SOUTHERN CROSS** The Snakes Of Shake TBC GOBS 1
- 12 **FAITH** Manicured Noise Pre PRE 006
- 13 **FAIRYTALE IN THE SUPERMARKET** The Raincoats Rough Trade RT013
- 14 **TEMPLE OF CONVENIENCE** Yeah Yeah Noh InTape ITT 023
- 15 **MY FACE IS ON FIRE** Felt Cherry Red CHERRY 45
- 16 **(HOW TO KEEP YOUR) HUSBAND HAPPY** The Cosmopolitans Albion ION 1021
- 17 **WHISTLING IN THE DARK** Easterhouse Rough Trade RT 164
- 18 **IDA-HO** Andi Sex-Gang Illuminated ILL 53
- 19 **OSTRICH** Phillip Boa And The Voodoo Club Constrictor JA 00008
- 20 **THIS IS MOTORTOWN** The Very Things DCL Electric DCL 1
- 21 **NEVER SAY THANKYOU** Mystere Five Flickknife FLS 202
- 22 **UPRIVER** Recipe Inertial ERT 7
- 23 **IT WILL COME** The Woodentops Rough Trade RT 169
- 24 **PLENTY** The Woodentops Food SNAK 2
- 25 **ASBESTOS LEAD ASBESTOS** World Domination Enterprises Karbon KAR 008
- 26 **KEYS TO YOUR HEART** The 101'ers Chiswick NS3
- 27 **GIRL IN THE RED LEATHER COAT** Living In Texas Chainsaw XTEXT 9
- 28 **TIME TUNNEL** The English Subtitles Small Wonder SMALL 22
- 29 **HYMN FROM A VILLAGE** James Factory FAC 119
- 30 **UP THE HILL AND DOWN THE SLOPE** The Loft Creation CRE 015

RAW 5

FAMOUS FIVES

RAW
RAW 1
RAW 2
RAW 3
RAW 4
RAW 5

SICK OF YOU The Users
YOU REALLY GOT ME The Hammersmith Gorillas
JOHNNY WON'T GO TO HEAVEN The Killjoys
MAKING TIME/PAINTER MAN The Creation
WADING THROUGH A VENTILATOR The Soft Boys

RABID
TOSH 101
TOSH 102
TOSH 103
TOSH 104
TOSH 105

CRANKED UP REALLY HIGH Slaughter And The Dogs
AIN'T BEEN TO NO MUSIC SCHOOL The Nosebleeds
INNOCENTSEP John Cooper Clarke
CENTRAL DETENTION CENTRE Gyro
JILTED JOHN Jilted John

FAST
FAST 1 NEVER BEEN IN A RIOT The Mad
FAST 2 WHERE TO NOW? 2.3
FAST 3 THE QUALITY OF LIFE NO 1 (a cheap visual package)
FAST 4 ELECTRONICALLY YOURS The Human League
FAST 5 DAMAGED GOODS Gang Of Four

SMALL WONDER
SMALL 1 MUCKY PUP Puncture
SMALL 2 HUNGRY Zeros
SMALL 3 CARPETTES EP The Carpettes
SMALL 4 SAFETY PIN EP Patrik Fitzgerald
SMALL 5 GLC Menace

DEPTFORD FUN CITY
DFC 01 PACKET OF THREE Squeeze
DFC 02 HOW MUCH LONGER? Alternative TV
DFC 03 BOOGIE WOOGIE 78 Jools Holland
DFC 04 LIFE AFTER LIFE Alternative TV
DFC 05 LOVE LIES LIMP Alternative TV

1. **MUCKY PUP — Puncture (Small Wonder 1977)**
On last year's anniversary of punk, the *NME* put out their Punk-A-Go-Go tape, and, in the opinion of many, leaving this gem off was an act of extreme stupidity. It was the first and best release for the Small Wonder label and, as far as independent releases go, was arguably the best of its year. In 1981 the song was covered by **The Exploited** on their first album, *Punk's Not Dead*.
2. **BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN — Brent Ford & The Nylons (Brum Beat 1978)**
Those not from West London probably won't find this as amusing as those that *do*. Brentford Nylons is a factory come superstore for people to buy nylon sheets and so forth, a prospect as horrendous as the TV ads the company perpetrated in the mid '70s to promote it. Big Rock Candy Mountain was in fact the flip side, but is much better than their cover of 19th Nervous Breakdown which was given A-side status. Good wacky pop music.
3. **WHAT A SUCKER — Le Ritz (Breaker 1977)**
Like the above, the record company hailed from sunny Birmingham. The tune itself is God awful, but deserves a mention for its classic intro. Instead of the standard punk 1-2-3-4, vocalist Steve Midnight shouted 'Hugh, Pew, Barny, McGrew, Cuthbert, Dibble, Grub' — the firemen from good old Trumpton, the toy town later immortalised by **Half Man Half Biscuit's** Trumpton Riots EP.
4. **BOSS MAN — The Mutants (Rox 1977)**
DON'T TAX ME — The Exile (Boring 1977)
Again, God awful records with just as dire picture sleeves, but the bands look brilliant. Both from 1977, punk rockers with early '70s hair styles, moustaches and flares — marvellous. I haven't a clue where The Mutants (who featured Roddy Rodent on guitar and Al Sation on bass) were from but The Exile were Glasgow lads.
5. **BEING BOILED — Human League (Fast 1978)**
WARM LEATHERETTE — The Normal (Mute 1978)
IN THE ARMY — Blah Blah Blah (Absurd 1979)
All similar in style — **Gary Numan** type musak without the unpleasantness. I was interviewing **The Cramps** for a fanzine when this style of sound was hip, and the DJ at the club we were in was blasting us with it. I asked **Ivy Rorschach** what she thought of it. "It's Nazi musak," she replied. I wouldn't put it so strongly, but they do kinda conjure up images of final solutions.



JOHN CLOPPEN CLARK, INNOCENTS E.P., CAT NO. TOSH10

FAST

FAST 1

NEVER BEEN IN A RIOT The Madcaps

SMALL WONDER

SMALL 1

MUCKY PUP Puncture

DEPTFORD FUN CITY

DFC 01

PACKET OF THREE Squeeze

- 2-Tone was the first label to dramatically bust out of the post punk/new wave/power pop glut. In '79 the air of inventiveness had grown rather dank and it took The Automatics from Coventry to break the mould.

- Touted in the Midlands, their early shows mixed reggae and punk in an uncompromising and most times uncomfortable concoction that remained slightly less than volatile.

- With another combo of same name inking a deal with Island, The Coventry Automatics eventually begat The Special AKA The Automatics, The Specials and The Special AKA. The music, through all this time, developed. Ska was a name bandied about, but there was more to this multi-faceted crew than that

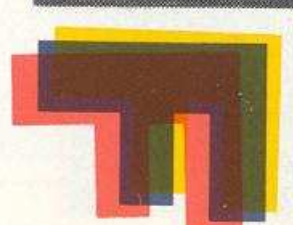


and, after a debut 45 produced independently through Spartan, Chrysalis took up the label. The rest is good listening.

- For the fact hungry, here is the 2-Tone singles collection
- 2-Tone TT 1/TT 2 *The Specials Gangsters/Selector The Selector*
- CHS TT 3 *Madness The Prince*
- CHS TT 4 *The Selector On My Radio*
- CHS TT 5 *The Specials A Message To You Rudi*
- CHS TT 6 *The Beat Ranking Full Stop/Tears Of A Clown*
- CHS TT 7 *The Special AKA Live EP*
- CHS TT 8 *The Selector Three Minute Hero*
- CHS TT 9 *Bodysnatchers Let's Do Rock Steady*
- CHS TT 10 *The Selector Missing Words*
- CHS TT 11 *The Specials Rat Race*
- CHS TT 12 *Bodysnatchers Easy Life*
- CHS TT 13 *The Specials Stereotype*
- CHS TT 14 *Swinging Cats Mantovani*
- CHS TT 15 *Rico Sea Cruise*
- CHS TT 16 *The Specials Do Nothing*
- CHS TT 17 *The Specials Ghost Town.*

- This was the label's first and only number one which heralded a change of direction, a broadening of musical scope and less positive commercial reaction to the label's releases. But label supremo and Specials mainman Jerry Dammers still had a few aces at hand.

- CHS TT 18 *Rhoda And The Special AKA The Boller*
- CHS TT 19 *Rico & The Special AKA Jungle Music*
- CHS TT 20 *The Apollinaires The Feeling's Gone*
- CHS TT 21 *The Higsons Tear The Whole Thing Down*
- CHS TT 22 *The Apollinaires Envy The Love*
- CHS TT 23 *The Specials War Crimes*
- CHS TT 24 *The Higsons Run Me Down*
- CHS TT 25 *The Specials Racist Friend*
- CHS TT 26 *The Specials Nelson Mandela*
- CHS TT 27 *The Specials What I Like Most About You Is Your Girlfriend*



2-TONE

Specials in porno pose

The Selector

• Points of interest are mainly that **Elvis Costello** originally allocated the number *CHS TT7* for his *I Can't Stand Up For Falling Down* but contracts got a little too hot to juggle. Advance copies only were pressed and they're, er, a little expensive. • The label is still in theory a *go* situation, but the Jerry Dammers quality control unit gives little away in the region of availability or regular releases. Still, pretty nifty collection all round, huh?

As a special bonus, the 2-Tone label have found half a dozen brightly coloured copies of the This Are 2-Tone retrospective album and they've given them to *Underground* to offer as bait to anyone who can answer the following very simple question. • Three members of The

***Specials* went off, after *Ghost Town*, to form their own combo *The Fun Boy Three*. What was the title of their first single? •**

Answers to *Underground/2-Tone*, c/o Keyboard Mail Room Ltd, Unit 5, Seager Bldgs, Brookmill Rd, London SE8 before April 3.

The Bodysnatchers compare threads



The Apollinaires get hazy

YELLOW PAGES

A gloriously incomplete list of names to drop. These are the acts who've wrestled with their conscience and straddled that difficult fence between major and independent status. Credibility still intact?

ADAM AND THE ANTS got leather and whips a retrial, played live to extend their clique, surfaced in *Jubilee* and did it on *Do It* before signing to CBS and attempting to re-design the pantomime

JANE AIRE delivered *Yankee Wheels* to Stiff as part of their *Rubber City* package. Signed to Virgin, a pic disc and another disappearance.

AGE OF CHANCE did two singles on their own label, *Riot Bible*, through *Red Rhino*. Anrik Rai put them in the studio, bought them some cycling shirts, got them to cover **Prince's** *Kiss* and release it on *FON*. They had a run in with the charts and then signed to Virgin.

AZTEC CAMERA first trod the boards, barefoot, as a *Postcard* set of renegades. Soon to be manhandled to *Rough Trade* they released two critically acclaimed ashtrays in the guise of *Pillar To Post* and *Oblivious*. Warners awoke, signed, and their eventual confusion and demise was set in motion.

THE BANNED got more than a few rave reviews around mid '78 for their *Hey Little Girl* single on South London's *Can't Eat Records*. They signed to *Harvest*, released another single and mysteriously disappeared.

BAUHAUS, Northampton's chief exporters of eye liner, had their classic *Bela Lugosi's Dead* released on *Small Wonder* before signing to *Beggars Banquet* and poking at the chart with a cover of **Bowie's** *Ziggy Stardust*. The group have since split in two. **Peter Murphy** released a solo LP at the end of last year and the other three B boys became **Love And Rockets**.

THE BEAT turned up in a box of demos for **Jerry Dammers** to listen to. Initial success through the 2-Tone explosion and their cover of *Tears Of A Clown* led to a deal with *Anista* and their own *Go-Feet* label. Eventually the group split leaving **Dave Wakelin** and **Ranking Roger** to get famous in the States as **General Public** and their skanking rhythm section to become the **Fine Young Cannibals**.

THE BIBLE did *Mahalia on Backs* last year and ex-**Mojo**-come-A&R person in charge at *Chrysalis* was impressed. The record was picked up, promoted and nearly made a bigger impact.

BIG IN JAPAN were a co-op of sorts (man) from fortress *Eric's* in *Liverpool*. Through the *Zoo* label they almost released some decent records and shared a 45 on *Eric's* with **The Chuddy Nuddies** (who were really the **Yachts**). *BIJ* boasted **Holly of Frankie** on bass, **Dave Balfe (Zodiac** and **S Switchblade** manager and former **Teardrop Explodes** person), **Jayne Casey** who's now in **Pink Industry** (formerly **Pink Military**) and **Bill Drummond** who released a *McScottish* LP of ballads on *Creation* last year. Confusing, eh?

BLANCMANGE used everything and the kitchen sink in their coupling of melody and madness. A limited edition debut disc soon became an embarrassment as the duo flirted with the charts following a deal with *London*. They split last year.

All you're gonna need is... business sense

Just as independent labels are beginning to wise up and investigate the possibilities of a ready reckoner or even a new calculator, there were labels who bridged the gap and have subsequently proved that there can be life, and possible cash rewards, through an independent company if handled properly. ■■■

Cherry Red's example of working on a publishing company (Complete Music) has worked well for them in the past. Early publishing conquests included **Blancmange** and **The The** and along the way other notable outfits have had their publishing administered by the people from Cherry Red. ■■■

And they ran quite a burgeoning label at one time — with acts as diverse as **Felt**, **Attila The Stockbroker**, **Thomas Leer**, **Piero Milesi**, **Everything But The Girl**, **The Nightingales** and **Quentin Crisp**. More recently the label has concentrated on **The Wiseacres** and **Mood Six**, while former label manager **Mike Alway** has set up a subsidiary for the company called EI (after a brief time at WEA and Blanco Y Negro). The EI label has been concentrating on diverse talents like pop stylists **Klaxon Five**, **The King Of Luxembourg** and **Louis Phillipe**. ■■■

As with Cherry Red, the Red Flame label started in similar fashion with publishing later developing the Red Flame and Ink labels. This has brought wider exposure for **The Moodists**, **C-Cat Trance**, **Anne Clark**, **Severed Heads**, **Scattered Order** and more recently **Phillip Boa And The Voodoo Club**, while another stalwart label from the late '70s, Glass, seems to constantly turn up class material — continually working with **The Jazz Butcher** and more recently **The Pastels** (but having seen action previously with **Elliot Sharp**, **Religious Overdose**, **In Embrace** and more). ■■■



Moodists



Pastels

THE BODINES, from somewhere near Manchester, snorted their first through Creation and have latterly been welcomed to the bosom of the Magnet label. Watch the press for pips.

THE BODYSNATCHERS were always awful. The girlfriends of the 2-Tone degeneration they graced the label with a shaky 45, changed their name to **The Belle Stars**, signed to Stiff and got lots written about them. Danger of actually having to write songs was relieved when they started covering tepid soul hits.

BRILLIANT are the bastard son(s) of Food, **Youth** (ex of **Killing Joke**) dusted off his ego, hit Saturday morning TV with a slur and got some accountants to produce the group's most recent record. Food show business sense, WEA never learn.

BUZZCOCKS were in the right place at the right time with the perfect sound. **Howard Devoto** and **Pete Shelley** did it all perfectly well on their seminal *Spiral Scratch* EP on New Hormones. Not too loud and with a hint of melody, by the time United Artists snapped them up Devoto had left but Shelley's songwriting prowess was beginning to glow. A series of pop gems followed and Devoto returned himself some time later on Virgin in **Magazine**.

CABARET VOLTAIRE first brought their odd disharmonies to the public through their *Headkick* EP on Rough Trade. Subsequent manoeuvres saw them on a number of labels eventually reaching Virgin in the early '80s (through **Stevo** and *Some Bizzare*). The romance didn't last and they were dropped after two LPs. Having temporarily reverted to their own Doublevision label they've now been signed to Parlophone.

CHAKK got the deal of the decade at MCA with manager **Amrik Rai** doing a **McLaren**. Now they've been dropped, have their own studio, and are on their manager's own FON label. Business sense.

CHINA CRISIS turned up on *Whistle Test* with *African And White*. Its release on Inevitable was followed by interest from Virgin, a tour with Simple Minds and eventual chart action following a mellowing of sounds and a night in the studio with a **Steely Dan**.

We Need Eleven Dollar Bills. You Only Got Ten

Throughout the independent rise, fall and circumnavigation, the larger labels have tried to either emulate or assist in their antics. On the bottom line, the chief idea for any large label involvement is to *use* cash and, hopefully, have it returned in a bigger suitcase.

Radar's primal '78 life was as a major label version of Stiff. Early movers for the label saw the catalogue running with **Nick Lowe, Iggy Pop, La Dusseldorf, Red Crayola, Elvis Costello** and **The 13th Floor Elevators** all vying for position. Others came and went, WEA held the purse strings and eventually pulled them tight shut.

Different levels of approach cropped up all over the place — **Spandau Ballet** signed to Chrysalis but could call their label Reformation, **Beggars Banquet** came in as an independent registered operation with distribution through WEA and a series of **Gary Numan** and **Tubeway Army** releases. This gave them the initial capital to develop into a healthy and successful label which has its own subsidiaries and works with **The Fall** and **The Go-Betweens** among others.

As Korova picked up **Echo And The Bunnymen** they attempted to flesh out the label with a few **Residents** LPs. But, they flopped. Similarly, Charisma's Pre label tried The Residents again but that didn't work (they did however manage to unearth two mighty immortal sides from **Manicured Noise** in the process).

The Chrysalis success with the 2-Tone label rode in on the crest of the last real *live* movement in the UK and diehard label supremo **Jerry Dammers** actually got a number one with **Ghost Town**, before the original line-up of the group split. More recently, Chrysalis' relationship with **Andy McDonald's** Go Discs has proved more than a smidgen fruitful with **Billy Bragg** and **The Housemartins** (and **His Latest Flame**, soon?), and their setting up of Blue Guitar with Rough Trade's **Geoff Travis** has allowed **The Shop Assistants** and **The Mighty Lemon Drops** to reach a much wider audience.

But, once again, it's WEA who've delved deepest into the independent market in recent years. The success of **Blanco Y Negro** — the Geoff Travis coalition with releases from **The Jesus And Mary Chain, James, Everything But The Girl** and **The Dream Academy** — has encouraged further similar experiments like last year's tie up with Vindaloo (primarily for **Fuzzbox**) and with Creation on the newly formed Elevation label which will feature **Primal Scream** and **The Weather Prophets**. They even signed **Husker Du** from SST.

Whether the small labels need the big labels is something for debate. The independent brown rice ethic clashes with small time business conduct, and the independent music for independent people aspect has its fans and its enemies. It all goes to make an interesting mismatch of ideas and unanswered questions. But, probably the best part of it all of this, is the differences inherent in the whole scene and the possibilities which are continually being expanded.

CLOCK DVA came in the wake of **Cabaret Voltaire's** cult appeal and lack of commercial success. Fetish singles and albums elevated them to the state of pop gurus. Polydor lapped it up when Fetish went broke, but after one album (their third in total) and general awegasms, it was all over. Some returned as **The Box**, some later as **TAGC**, some died.

JOHN COOPER CLARKE was bottled off on his first evening in the punk melee of London's Vortex. The totally unmarketable rant became the *thing* with some slick backing tracks and Clarke's humour winning through. After an EP for Rabid he signed to CBS, released the state of the art **Disguise In Love** then watered down the formula and his blood/sugar ratio.

THE CORTINAS suffered a sad end. Their first **Defiant Pose** single on Step Forward led to them being signed to CBS. They never released a record and rumours were rife that some of the majors were taking out smaller bands so there wouldn't be as much competition to their prime acts.

ELVIS COSTELLO started with Stiff, went to Radar, then F Beat and now finds himself back on his own label Imp/Demon. From preppy punk to country and back through blues and more. And mostly success at his own beckoning.

THE CURE began life with **Killing An Arab** and **10.15 Saturday Night**, a primal independent mover on Walthamstow's Small Wonder label, eventually being picked for superstardom by Phonogram.

THE DAMNED did it their way. Changing their name, shedding characters like **Captain Sensible, Bryan James** who went to **The Lords Of The New Church**, and then reforming, re-aligning, and the like. Chart success eluded them through their days at Stiff and Big Beat/Ace/Chiswick but when they signed to MCA a couple of years back that changed.

DEVO were eccentric. Stiff licensed their early records from the States before Virgin picked them up. The first LP was a classic but they got madder and less controllable as they went on.

EASTERHOUSE started life at London but thinly disguised their debut with a hand sprayed Rough Trade EP. The label dropped them and, following a UK tour with **The Smiths**, the group joined RT. Two singles and the groovy **Contenders** LP gave them national attention but a split has halved their ranks.

OUT ON A LIMB

Some say the beauty of the independent music scene in the UK is that virtually anyone can get out there and do it. Understandably streams of left-field outfits have therefore found their way onto vinyl through one method or another allowing themselves the room to develop their style.

Even as Stiff and Chiswick were in the first throes of tuning their cash registers, oddball outfits were heading for the independent racks.

Next to Elvis Costello and The 101'ers were Nurse With Wound and later on The Fire Engines (from Scotland) would share space with Foetus (and his many variations) from North London.

Those early Nurse releases were hailed as totally self indulgent by their perpetrators, but a hungry band of regular punters followed their every move. The catalogue (initial releases were all on the group's own United Dairies label) featured albums from The Lemon Kittens (a duo comprised of Karl Blake, later of The Shock Headed Peters, and Danielle Dax), Musique Concrète and more.

Creative freedom was developed with Throbbing Gristle's Industrial label. Their four albums and numerous singles are now collector's items. Through their catalogue, which also released every TG live show on cassette, there were singles from Dorothy (an amalgamation of former Rema Rema drummer Max and latter day Psychic TV guitarist Alex Ferguson), Elisabeth Welch (a strangled version of Stormy Weather from Derek Jarman's *The Tempest*),

seminal SPK, eccentric Monte Cazazza and eventually William Burroughs.

Running at the same time, Fetish gave the world everything from 8 Eyed Spy to 23 Skidoo, Clock DVA to The Bongos, but eventually the packaging got a little too extravagant and the label folded.

Later, attempts to continue the formula fell on rather less positive ground. In the wake of metal beat (circa early '80s) Test Dept and SPK signed to majors while contemporary (weirder) outfits such as Konstruktivits, Bushido and Attrition were left to struggle and scrape with the ideologically sound and well presented Third Mind label.

Some years on, little has changed. There are still Nurse With Wound albums and tapes, Current 93 continue releasing obscure gems, The Residents have moved to their umpteenth lable and Some Bizarre survive with The The and Soft Cell providing the cash and dash to allow the label and its subsidiaries to release material and develop the likes of Renaldo And The Loaf, Einstürzende Neubauten and more.

ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN

started on the Zoo label but after one single, the excellent Pictures On My Wall, they were grabbed by Korova — a newly created WEA subsidiary who have nurtured their appeal through a string of chart (or close) singles.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI were Norway's odd couple whose doomy ballads hit the scene through Uniton. Five years on Virgin clutched their privates and released two singles before a critically ignored album. The UK yawned, but France took them to the top of their charts.

GANG OF FOUR mustered a healthy EP for Fast before taking their bolshie guitar mangled sound to EMI. After the excellent EMI debut LP Entertainment the bass player left for **Shriekback** and things went downhill.

JOOLS HOLLAND played with **Squeeze**, did a few solo things on Deptford Fun City, backed **The Police** and then was arrested for impersonating **Bobby Davro**.

HOLY TOY were Norwegian radicals with a Polish leader. Early Uniton activity saw them revered and raided. Signed to Sonet for the UK they recorded a coal sack on heat and were dropped.

THE HUMAN LEAGUE began humbly with Electronically Yours, a two tracker on Fast which coupled Being Boiled and Circus Of Death. Sheffield's sharpest played punk niteries with the likes of **The Rezillos** and **Phil Oakey** developed a dynamic line in heading beer glasses before being snapped up by Virgin. His compadres later became **BEF** and in turn **Heaven 17**.

HÜSKER DÜ were the other thing to come out of Minneapolis apart from **Prince**. Early releases through the **Dead Kennedys** Alternative Tentacles label were followed by a stint of some note at SST (LPs included the double Zen Arcade and the groovy Flip Your Wig). Since then they've upped roots and joined Warners. Their first LP, Candy Apply Grey, turned heads, their new double, Warehouse, is even better.

IT'S IMMATERIAL began life on Liverpool's Inevitable label. People took notice when they got themselves in a Sunday supplement's A Day In The Life section (about their love of beans on toast). They signed to WEA but were dropped. Eventually they were picked up by Virgin subsidiary Siren and after a few so-so single responses

From Derek Jarman's THE TEMPEST



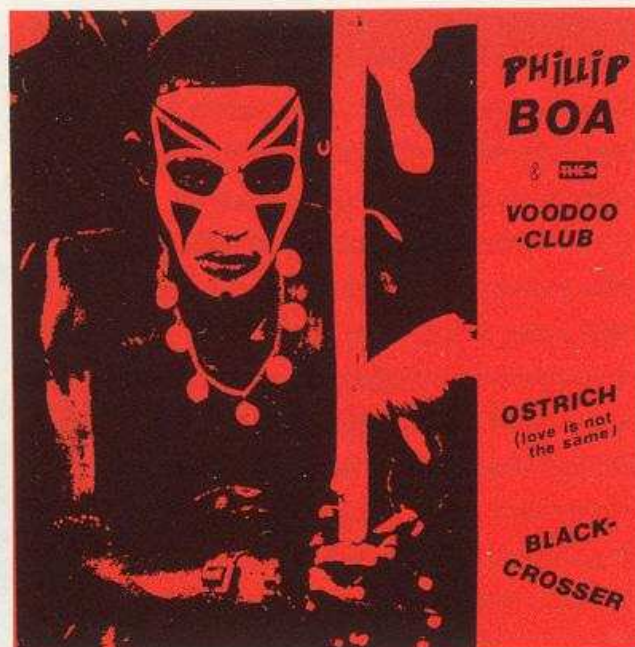
Elisabeth Welch sings
Stormy Weather

The UK isn't the only place, obviously, where the independent label network has seen a new wave of hurried activity. In the States, the country and soul networks have been active for years, and now they've been joined by a host of left fielders whose activities provide music and visuals as varied as their imagination can stand.

For example, check out Independent Projects (PO Box 60357, Los Angeles, California 90060). Their roster of acts includes the exceptionally excellent **Savage Republic**, **Ten Foot Faces**, **For Against** and other such luminaries. They also gave the world **Camper Van Beethoven's** classic Telephone Free Landslide Victory album. And all releases come in magnificent limited editions with letterpress sleeves.

In France, Illusion Production (15 rue Pierre Curie, 14120 Mondeville, France) whose beautifully packaged singles, cassettes and albums have featured material from **DDAA**, **La Societe Des Timides A La Parade Des Oiseaux**, **Un Department**, **The Twins** and **Craig Burk**.

In Germany, Constrictor (AM Heedbrink 13, 4600 Dortmund 30, West Germany) mirror the UK enthusiasm for the independent single, with label owner **Uli** often enthusing over the quality product of those seminal UK independent singles. As a means of continuing that spirit, Constrictor have released 45s from **Phillip Boa And The Voodoo Club** (whose recent releases have been licensed in the UK by Ink), **Christianhound**, **The Palookas** (featuring ex-**Swell Map Jowe Head**) and **The Membranes**.



Everyone decided they'd liked them for years and rocketed *Driving Away From Home* into the charts.

JAMES were much talked about ages before they released their first couple of singles on Factory. Having gone through a beards-but-no-interviews phase they signed to Blanco Y Negro and did it with **Lenny Kaye**.

JILTED JOHN, and his Mancunian humour, was first revealed on *Rabid*. Signed to EMI, the resultant album of similar pre-pubescent in-talk bombed and John later turned up as a speaking extra on *Coronation Street*.

LANDSCAPE kicked off their robotic jazz gyrations with two obscure offerings on the Event Horizon label before going major with the quirky (ahem) *Einstein A-Go-Go*. After several albums they split with drummer-come-computer person **Richard Burgess** opting for the production stool.

THOMAS LEER straddled the experimental fence with tie ups, through **Throbbing Gristle**, with **Robert Rental** and Mute supremo **Daniel Miller**. After a long silence he turned up two years ago on Arista with a selection of techno Euro pop that's probably best forgotten.

MADNESS took the north London nutty sound from the terraces through 2-Tone to Stiff. Vid success led them to the charts and eventually to their own Zarjaz label through Virgin.

THE MEMBERS did a one-off for Stiff with *Solitary Confinement*. Live action saw them signed to Virgin, the first LP was great but then they ran out of songs and split up.

THE MISSION were half of **The Sisters Of Mercy** who grew their hair even longer and rocked out on *Chapter 22*. An impressed Mercury label snapped them up and they hit the national charts at the end of last year.

THE MONOCHROME SET took their early wares to Rough Trade and ended up signing to Virgin subsidiary Dindisc. After two great albums and numerous singles they left the label for Cherry Red, eventually splitting up a couple of years back.

SO. WHERE TO NOW?

Just like way back when, you know, when the independent label scene first gulped for air, there is confusion and mass uncertainty within the larger record companies.

• Now that the new breed of businessmen have established themselves, spent out on a dinky calculator and waded through the complexities of VAT, the MCPS and the PRS (what?), then they might *just* be able to keep hold of some of the newer talent that's bursting to escape to a wider audience. If you hear some bozo constantly putting down what's happening on the independent scene, or in the independent marketplace, don't worry... they don't know what they're talking about. If they carry on, just roll up your copy of *Underground* and thwack them on the back of the head*. That should slow them down a bit. • If positive proof were needed of the current state of play, just search out some of these recent releases and see just how good the music of today really is. All of these have arrived at *Underground* this week.

MY BLOODY VALENTINE Sunny Sundae Smile Lazy Records RT C
Another piece of twangy fuzzed-out pop from the would-be Monkees of the '90s.

URBAN COWBOYS Broken Promises Denbeat RR C An almost ballad-
esque affair with a pop veneer and a '60s tinge which transcends the trashy inade-
quacies of their contemporaries.

DATBLYGU Hwgrgrawthog Anhrefn Re C Brilliantly structured piece of
aggressive pop with an evil streak through the heart. Sung in Welsh too.

MY BABY'S ARM Hung In The Playground Kasper RT C. This one's
absolutely... A deep driving voice, funky bass and a brittle guitar glueing it all
together. The end result is much more than a choral collage and a catchy chorus,
too.

JIH Big Blue Ocean Jungle J C A David Ball (Soft Cell) production job that's
brimming with style, a string quartet sound and a neat melody line. Moody.

THE REVOLTING COCKS You Often Forget Wax Trax RT C Loud and
pulsating psycho dancefloor stuff from a name worth quoting.

BIFF BANG POW! The Whole World's Turning Brouhard! Creation
RT C The return of the spy thriller with squidgy organ and a noisy guitar. Surreal.

OMD did their earliest bad dances as Factory technos. Electricity was a tasteful debut and after developing nicely through Dindisc they hit a rich vein of popism and increased their bank accounts (more recently with Virgin).

THE ONLY ONES' drugged-out confusion first came to light on Vengeance with their classy Lovers Of Today single. Signing to CBS they became a *real* rock band.

ORANGE JUICE twanged with the best of them on Postcard. Salty singles and mass exposure for a new guitar generation attracted Polydor. The group signed, the relationship soured. The OJ's phase one through Postcard had four fine 45s. Through Polydor they had even more, but in a different, er, stylee (courtesy of **Dennis Bovell**).

THE POLICE were mainstays of Illegal (a brother company to Step Forward and Deptford Fun City). Their first single, Fall Out, didn't feature **Sting** — and even with the educated one they did little until **Miles Copeland** came up with the magic business combination. The rest of the story is...

PRIMAL SCREAM centre around **Bobbie Gillespie**, who saw time as stand up drummer for the Mary Chain. With shades in place and after a brief selection of tracks on Creation, the Screammers are one of the first signings to new WEA label Elevation.

PSYCHIC TV came in with silly haircuts after **Throbbing Gristle** split in two. First two albums, both for Some Bizzare, through RCA then CBS, didn't get the sales they warranted and the duo of **Genesis P Orridge** and **Sleazy Christopherson** headed back to the independent marketplace. Gen's hyperdelic **Brian Jones** fetish finally hit the charts on the group's own Temple label, but meanwhile Sleazy had left to join **Coil**.

THE RED GUITARS had four or so singles, cut a neat album called Slow To Fade and always looked set to do something. Eventually Virgin took the plunge, there was a slight line up change, a sound redirection and a close one with the charts. The latest scam is that the Hull renegades have returned to the Humber and have split into at least two.

ROOGALATOR wore matching boiler suits, did singles for Stiff and Do It before signing to Virgin. There they did the classic pop of Love And The Single Girl before splitting up.

THE BABYMEN For King Willy One Little Indian NM C Treacherous treason about kings and things given a gruff horror flick treatment with a pop overtone and a story to behold.

WE FREE KINGS Oceans DDT FF C Weird Celtic rock sound that makes Dexy's sound like a naff pop band. Oh, they *are*. Folk meets soul and a fiddle gets strung out.

LAST PARTY Mr Hurst Harvey's Re C Brooding melodies over a downbeat echoey guitar/piano mix. Bustingly beautiful and bristling.

MIAOW When It All Comes Down Factory P C Destined for mass exposure, Miaow's messy discordant twang are a neat foil for Cath Carroll's exquisite vocals.

FELINE JIVE Kiss 'n' Tell Massive Re C Mellow new pop sounds that could easily be cleaned up and ruined on such and such a big label. This is massive enough.

THE HOOK 'N' PULL GANG Pour It Down Yer Throat Bitch Hog FF C Loud, nasty, dirty guitars and a chant-a-long death threat that's really something good. Out of, er, control, I think.

PHIL WILSON Waiting For A Change Creation RT C A June Bride heads into the Burritos country-esque-I-knew-Gram-Parsons revival and comes out smelling of Texan roses.

VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE It's Just A City Food RT C They're gonna be bigger than The Bangles *and* there's only two of them. Americana pop with heart *and* soul.

So there we are, just 14 reasons why the independent market is on the *up* (and that's just this week's fodder). What with all this activity and upturned mouths a cert, expect some rallying from the majors and a healthy report on it all from *Underground* each month as it all neatly unfolds.

* Ah yes, a warning, hitting loudmouths over the head with *Underground* can be dangerous... so don't let them know who did it.

THE REZILLOS rampant **Peel**-provoked guitar music coupled kitsch *Thunderbirds* dress sense with raucous punky muzak. First releases on Sensible led to national tours and an eventual contract with Dindisc. After disappearing, they came back as The Rezillos and **The Revillos**. Some of them went onto join the **Human League** too.

SHAM 69 made a skinhead-infested debut in '78 and never really shook off their dodgy image. After releasing a three track EP on Step Forward they signed to Polydor, pre-empted **Chas And Dave** with *Hurry Up Harry* and then lead Sham **Jimmy Pursey** embarked on a faltering solo career.

THE SKIDS' Scots bravado led **Richard Jobson** and **Stuart Adamson** to London after just one single, their best probably, called *Charles*, on *No-Bad*. Signed to Virgin, the sound developed but they never got the big hit (although *Charade* and *Masquerade* came close). Neither did they get the ultimate Skids sound to flow on an album. Adamson later became a **Big Country** while Jobson split his time between deep poetry and **The Armoury Show**.

THE SMITHS flaunted with flowers and a groovy twang coupling **Morrissey's** sexless(?)/sexy(?) vocals and **Johnny Marr's** pop guitar ballads. Through *Rough Trade* they released a string of excellent singles, resurrected the career of **Sandie Shaw** and have most recently signed to EMI. Shoplifters of the world rejoice.

SOFT CELL had Leeds at their mercy with their debut tacky EP on their own label. Through **Stevo's** enthusiasm they hit the electronic boom at the right time, got into leather straplettes and nearly top tened with *Memorabilia*. Their on-off scandal romance with the press served them well and pop music and tales of bedsits resulted. Originally a duo, **Dave Ball** was finally ousted — or left — after **Marc Almond's** solo *Marc And The Mamba's* tour. The show goes on...

THE SPECIALS were always wavering on the edge. With so many in tow it was only a matter of time before personnel changes or arguments happened. On *2-Tone* they made some great records (and occasionally still do). In the meantime, they've spawned **JB's All Stars**, **The Fun Boy Three**, **Colourfield** and more recently **After Tonight**.

£ With independent singles being pressed in such small quantities, it's hardly surprising that some of the rarer items from acts who've gone on to develop their careers with larger labels can see their earlier exploits changing hands for pretty ridiculous sums. Even cult outfits like **The Cramps** and **New Order**, who haven't succumbed to the clank of the chequebook, can't avoid the overpricing, rarity and collectability of some of their material.

£ Taken from *Record Collector* magazine (a monthly guide to disc prices as varied as r'n'b and hardcore punk at 43/45 St Mary's Rd, Ealing, London, W5 5RQ) and from a straw poll at record fairs, here are some of the more usual prices you could expect to be asked for some of the acts who've emerged from the independent quagmire.



Of course, this collector's chart doesn't include the rarer than rare gem (?) by **The Moors Murderers** (who featured **Chrissie Hynde** and **Steve Strange**, pictured above), more obscure sides from the Postcard school or the **Snivelling Shits**, whose vinyl outings have been rumoured to change hands from anything ranging from the price of a Chicken Tikka (main course) to in excess of £100.

As the mid-'70s boom for obscure rock 'n' roll and hard to track soul music brought a new generation of enthusiast to record fairs, the punk boom and subsequent independent label explosion saw a million other unlocatable oddities racked in all the wrong places. Maybe would-be label owners couldn't shift initial quantities of their tried and tested product but little did they know that the left-field catalogue number propping up their wonky settee was fast to become a collector's item in name, number, size, colour and quality/quantity. Camden Town's burgeoning weekend trade centre for period vinyl was seeing vast sums changing hands for **Zappa** originals, **Orange Juice** 45s, **Vince Taylor** white labels, **Stones'** bootlegs and the like and in the latter '80s it's not surprising to see punters with a pocket full of **Bogshed** and **Loft** live tapes parting with more than a fiver for **Kevin Rowlands** in his earliest incarnation as a **Killjoy** on the Raw label. Rhythm Records trades in all areas of music, but their top five most sought out names are **Joy Division**, **Elvis Costello**, **Foetus**, **The Fall** and **The Teardrop Explodes...**

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 1 | THE CRAMPS Human Fly (US, Vengeance NR 9927-1) | £30 |
| 2 | THE SMITHS Still Ill (<i>Brazilian flexi disc</i>) | £25 |
| 3 | JOY DIVISION A Factory Sample (Factory FAC 2) | £20 |
| 4 | ORANGE JUICE Simply Thrilled Honey (Postcard 806) | £17 |
| 5 | THE CURE Killing An Arab (Small Wonder SMALL 11, <i>autographed</i>) | £15 |
| 6 | THE DAMNED New Rose (New Rose AE 140, <i>French gatefold sleeve</i>) | £15 |
| 7 | JOSEF K Radio Drill Time (<i>French blue label and poster pic</i>) | £15 |
| 8 | BAUHAUS Bela Lugosi's Dead (Small Wonder Teeny 2, <i>12 inch white vinyl</i>) | £10 |
| 9 | THE DAMNED New Rose (Stiff BUY 6, <i>original pic sleeve</i>) | £10 |
| 10 | THE TEARDROP EXPLODES Sleeping Gas (ZOO CAGE 003) | £10 |
| 11 | THE DAMNED Neat Neat Neat (Stiff BUY 10, <i>original pic sleeve</i>) | £8 |
| 12 | THE FALL Marquis Cha Cha (Kamera ERA 14) | £8 |
| 13 | NEW ORDER Five track Canadian promo (REP 313) | £8 |
| 14 | THE FIRE ENGINES Get Up And Use Me (Codex CODEX 1, <i>original pic sleeve</i>) | £6 |
| 15 | NEW ORDER Confusion (<i>one sided German promo on coloured vinyl, LC 5661</i>) | £6 |
| 16 | THE CULT Sanctuary (<i>Canadian poster sleeve, SOU 2361</i>) | £5 |
| 17 | THE JUNE BRIDES Every Conversation (Pink PINKY 3, <i>original sleeve</i>) | £5 |
| 18 | THE LURKERS Free Admission (Beggars Banquet BEGA 1, <i>blue vinyl, pic</i>) | £5 |
| 19 | THE BIRTHDAY PARTY Friend Catcher (4AD AD12, <i>original pic</i>) | £4 |
| 20 | THE TELEVISION PERSONALITIES Where's Bill Grundy Now? (Rough Trade RT33) | £4 |

SPK got primal way back in '79 through **Throbbing Gristle's** Industrial label, but it wasn't until the metal-bashing incarnation of a couple of years ago that they got the big cheque. Signed to Elektra in the States, Warners serviced their LP in the UK and after minimum glitterati attention the group were dropped.

THAT PETROL EMOTION are drawn out godsons of The Undertones. A couple of independent 45s, one on Pink, led to a critically acclaimed debut LP, *Manic Pop Thrill*, on Demon. Since then they've signed to Polydor.

THE TEARDROP EXPLODES were Liverpool refugees who got serious. Two 45s on Zoo led to a deal with Phonogram and a sporadically inventive career for **Julian Cope**. Recently returned as The Julian Cope Explodes.

THE THE tried and tried again. **Matt Johnson** changed line up and sound and earliest traces can be heard on *Cold Spell Ahead* on SBL (the Some Bizzare label). A disjointed version of *Uncertain Smile*, it bombed as did the first release of his debut solo album *Burning Blue Soul* on 4AD. Eventually **Steve** sold him to Epic and after a couple of years of US interest the deal was clinched with cross channel excitement leading up to his second The The album, *Infected*.

TEST DEPT came from a garage in New Cross. Bashing metal they were likened to Stockhausen and the dustbinmen. Through Some Bizzare they signed to Phonogram, did an excellent dance 45, a box set, and were dropped. The sound of the car spring can again be heard on independent corners everywhere.

THE TRIFFIDS' Australian backwoods sound has been cult and classic for some time in the UK and following their most recently raved about *In The Pines* LP, they've signed to Island to bring you more of the same. (Or better.)

THE UNDERTONES strolled into the hearts of millions through **John Peel's** undying love of their debut *Good Vibrations* EP *Teenage Kicks*. They inked it with EMI and released a string of would-be hits but it wasn't until **Feargal Sharkey** shook off his cohorts and went to Virgin that mega success, mentions in *Rolling Stone* and a divorce was on the cards for the wee Irish man. Other Undertones became **Eleven** then **That Petrol Emotion** (see supplementary entry elsewhere).

FAMOUS FIVE: most desirable acts

1 JOY DIVISION. Most requested cuts from the Divvies vary from their Sordid Sentimentale limited pressing of Atmosphere/Dead Souls, Earcom 2 — the group's contribution to Fast Records' Earcom series (with other tracks from **Basczax** and **Thursdays**) — plus their side of the Factory double 7 inch package, a Factory Sample (for which they contributed two tracks, Glass and Digital, sharing the package with tunes from **Cabaret Voltaire** and **John Dowie**).

2 ELVIS COSTELLO. Early Stiff 45s, Less Than Zero (BUY 11), Alison (BUY 14), Red Shoes (BUY 15), Watching The Detectives (BUY 20) and the Radar sides Chelsea (ADA 3), Pump It Up (ADA 10) and Radio Radio (ADA 24) are all pieces of precious plastic.

3 FOETUS. Early singles under an array of *nom de plumes* through **Clint Ruin's** seminal Self Immolation label include OKFM by **Foetus Under Glass**, Wash It All Off by **You've Got Foetus On Your Breath**, Tell Me What Is The Bane Of Your Life by **Philip And His Foetus Vibrations** and the 12 inch Custom Built For Capitalism from **Foetus Over Frisco**.

Other much mentioned combos murmured in hurried slurred sentences by quaking tourists visiting Rhythm in Camden Lock, include **The Soft Boys**, **The Boys**, **Killing Joke** (their primal 10 incher) and all manner of even more obscure material from the Zoo catalogue ... especially the catch-all LP

4 THE FALL. Extra special mind-numbing collectability surrounds the Mancunians' earliest singles. Their many line up changes and label swaps make the story even cloudier. Due for special attention are Step Forward sides Bingo Masters Breakout (SF 7) and It's The New Thing (SF 9) plus their latter day Rough Trade offerings Rowche Rumble and Fiery Jack. All the tracks from these 7 inch delights can be found lurking on Early Fall 77-79 on the Step Forward label. After that the story switches to the soon-to-go-walkies Kamera label before the group found their current abode down Beggars way.

5 THE TEARDROP EXPLODES. With the 13th generation's discovery of **Julian Cope's** eccentricities and pop potential, The Teardrop Explodes' first two singles have hit paydirt. Both on Liverpool's Zoo label, they were the group's first waxing, a three track EP featuring Sleeping Gas, Camera Camera and Kirkby Workers Dream Fades, which first appeared in a red and black sleeve (later to change to blue and black). Both colourings will set you back around a tenner, while their second single Bouncing Babies goes for around a fiver (flipside of that one was All I Am Is Loving You).

documenting the period, From The Shores Of Lake Placid, with its contributions from **The Teardrop Explodes**, **Echo And The Bunny-men**, **Big In Japan** (featuring **Holly**), **Those Naughty Lumps**, **Lori And The Chameleons**, **The Turquoise Swimming Pools** and more.

WAH featured **Pete Dinklage** and had many versions of their name. Early Inevitable sides suggested they'd blown it before they found the gear lever but Story Of The Blues and major label support cemented the eccentric's career.

THE WEATHER PROPHETS came from the ashes of **The Loft** and are powered by songwriter **Pete Astor**. After two singles on Creation they've just signed to WEA's new Elevation label.

WE'VE GOT A FUZZBOX AND WE'RE GONNA USE IT did it. Total averageness in the extreme made teeth braces and **X-Ray Spex** revivalism a strong possibility. The Fuzzies' Brummieness was cute and their Vindaloo EP impressed WEA. Inept performances proved that many journalists had grooved but few had listened. Longevity is in the lap of the gods.

YACHTS' brief encounter with Stiff on Suffice To Say led them to Radar and eventually Polydor. The big punch with exotic packaging and cover versions didn't work though.

ZODIAC MINDWARP AND THE LOVE REACTION are crap. But, Zod is brill. The group that couldn't entertain a hamster in a rabid fever have a trump card in Zod, a punky unshaven wretch who could cover for **Wogan** at the drop of a Durex. The group, however, suck. Start at Food, wobble, go to Phonogram. Don't release another record.

So, who'll be next to make that drastic move to megastardom? Even as we speak (sorry, even as you peruse), cash is being talked about in a dozen or so boardrooms. The Voice Of The Beehive is a name to juggle with, there's general enthusiasm about SST's The Meat Puppets (which will be further increased, no doubt, if former labelmates Hüsker Dü get good sales figures for their Warehouse double). Talk too, and mucho press for The Band Of Holy Joy. Early interest about Slab, The Wedding Present (of course, or again) and Crazyhead and Portion Control (now managed by Tom Pet Shop Boys Watkins). Hey... it's just like a rock 'n' roll supermarket. Know where I'm coming from?



TALES FROM THE UNDERGROUND — TO HELL AND BACK