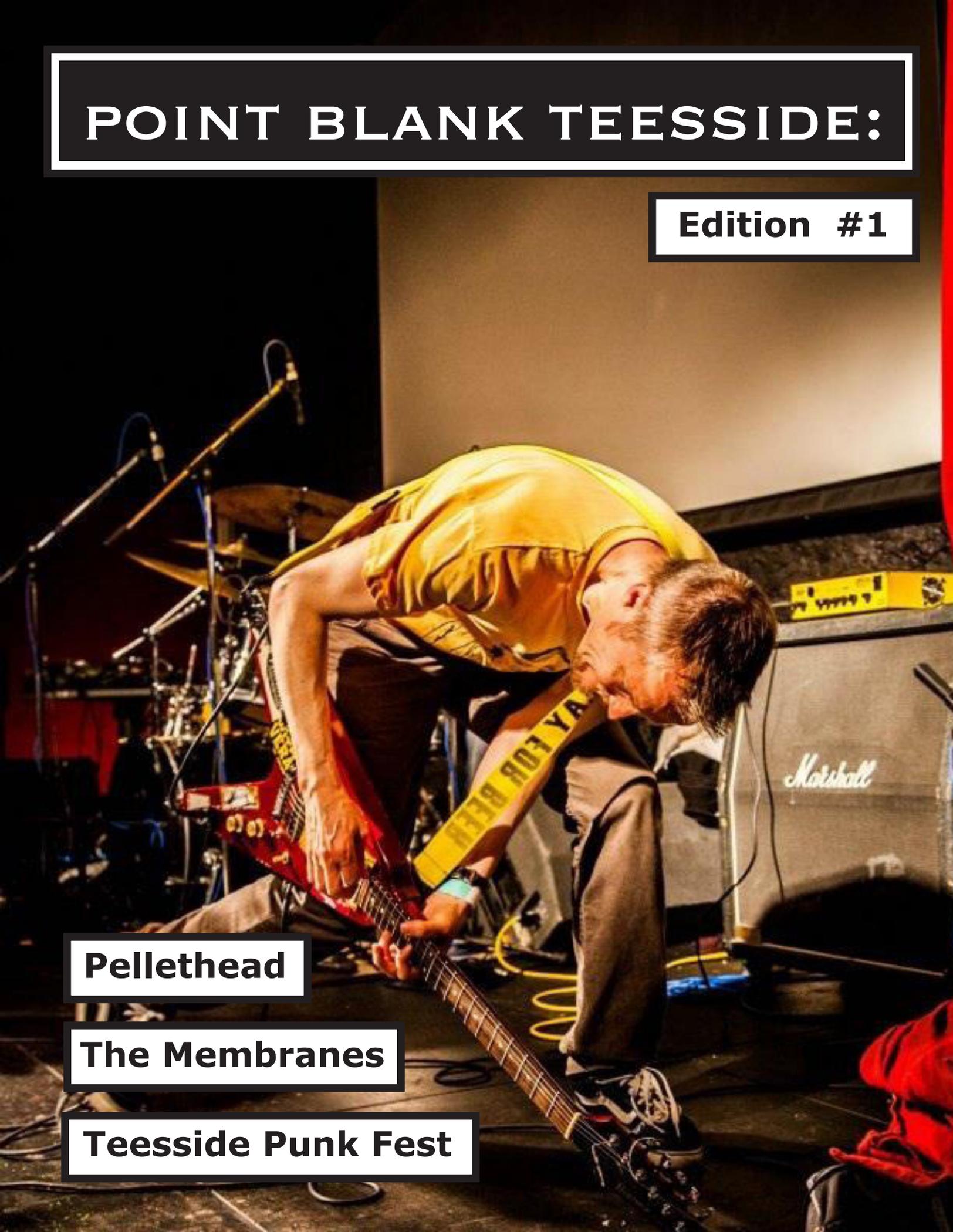


POINT BLANK TEESSIDE:

Edition #1



Pellethead

The Membranes

Teesside Punk Fest

EDITOR:

Point Blank:

adj.

1. aimed or fired from close range.
2. straightforward, explicit.

adv.

3. with direct aim.
4. without hesitation or deliberation.

Dear readers,

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome one and all to POINT BLANK TEESSIDE.

Six months ago, POINT BLANK POZNAN was gracing the shelves of pubs in Poland. But since relocating back to the UK, I thought I'd give it a go over here instead and see if anyone was interested in reading what I had to say.

I can't believe how many gigs are on and how many decent nights out I've had since coming back. As you may gather from reading the zine, the Westgarth has been my personal pick of the bunch and I've really enjoyed seeing what the boys over there have done.

Interviewing Pellethead was a laugh (cheers Richie for the sentimental can of Lech) and I enjoyed propping up the bar in the Golden Smog with owner John to chat about how he set up the We Shall Overcome gig.

There's been loads of other stuff on offer too. If anyone fancies penning stuff for POINT BLANK TEESSIDE, then I'm not hard to find. Let me know - the more the merrier!

Here's hoping the zine is as successful as I think it will be...

Steve Blank

All the views expressed in this fanzine are those of the individual writer and do not represent everybody involved.



CONCERT:

Mark Morriss

Musiclounge 25/11/16

It didn't start off promising. Stood at the bar watching The Angry Amigos wasn't the best gig I've seen and, as I'm sure most folk there will testify, while they put up a brave front something wasn't quite right.

The Stooges' classic 'I Wanna Be Your Dog' and 'These Boots Are Made for Walkin' (Nancy Sinatra?) caught my attention, but apparently rehearsals had been sparse and there was a bit of tension from the band mates after they stepped down from the stage. Whatever the issue, I'm guessing I must have caught them on a bad night.

But fear not. Steve McCormick stepped up to the mark and put on a decent show. Never heard of this guy before but his acoustic tunes managed to lift the atmosphere and capture the crowd's attention.

The tunes are catchy, poppy and there was an over-all good-time bounce to the proceedings. Ideal for standing at the back of the room (I'm a sucker for standing at the bar) and watching the gig from an unusual angle. I won't pretend to know much about Steve, but from a bit of research it seems he's got a couple of albums out and knows his way around the live local scene. You could do a lot worse than check out one of his evenings.

During the set, I managed to get a quick chat with The Bluetones front-man Mark Morriss who is also no stranger to this town. "I'm excited about playing here tonight. I've played here many times before. At Kubar, Arc and the Stockton Calling festival."

Sandwiched between concerts in Hartlepool and Northallerton, the gig at Musiclounge seemed a good venue for Mark to entertain his NE

fans, some of which I spoke to, had travelled down from Sunderland and had taken a day off work so as not to miss tonight's performance.

Kicking off with 'This Is the Lie (And That's the Truth)', he got the crowd onside from the off with his no-frills brand of indie-rock - tunes you felt like you'd known all your years.

I spent most of my time stood with life-longs fans Dave and Ally (the Sunderland duo) who between them knew more of the lyrics being spouted out than the rest of the room put together. There was one song however Dave wasn't quite able to put his finger on: "Betty ... Boots". It certainly sounded a little out of place, more reminiscent of Bowie or Lou Reed. A quick google search just brought up a few pics of sexy winter footwear. Not what we were looking for but, f**k it, it'll do.

There were a couple of classics to entertain the casual fan, 'Marblehead Johnson' and 'Bluetonic' being two that stood out, but I was surprised by Mark's choice not to play 'Slight Return' - surely The Bluetones' biggest hit? He did begin playing the opening of it with a strange Latin-style twist, but stopped after a few bars. Such a tease.

Post-gig I stayed back and chatted to a few fellow gig-goers and a couple of the regulars. An overall jovial atmosphere and air of good spirits.



Even having my drink spilled by Liz (lovely lady who was good enough to help out the venue by taking ticket money) did nothing to dampen my spirits. Although to be fair, she did replace what was essentially a mouthful of cider with an entire new pint. Top hospitality and all-round bonus!

S.B.

PENG MUSIC PRESENTS
MARK MORRISS
(THE BLUETONES)
PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS
McCormick // Kyle Cullen // The Angry Amigos
Live At **MUSICLOUNGE**
21D Yarm Lane, Stockton-on-Tees. TS18 3DR
FRIDAY 25th NOVEMBER
£6 ENTRY

CONCERT:

The Membranes

Westgarth 18/11/16

It's a gig Not a Fucking Funeral

Despite working and spending most of my time in the mighty Boro these days, until tonight I hadn't had a proper chance to check out the wonders that are Bedford and Baker Street. So after signing off from the office I headed down to The Twisted Lip to sample what was on offer before the gig. Great little pub and lived up to the hype I'd read about it. Managed to eavesdrop on a conversation about 'Searching for Sugarman' while sampling one of the finest ciders I'd had in a while. Even though it was red.

Pellethead were on mighty early. 6.15pm? So I was glad I'd made it through the doors rather than rush home for a shower and a shave. The drummer's job is always overlooked, but Graham drove the band very well and looked like he had fun doing it. Shaun's bass sounded thumping (not sure whose amp he was using but I recommend it) and was the stand out for me. A few new(ish) tracks were displayed - at least ones the boys had just recorded. 'Skips'

and 'Hear me Now' sounded spot on, especially the latter which was a great way to end the set.

The Magick Godmothers followed suit with their brand of dirty punk-fuelled blues. "Why don't you all come forward. It's a gig not a fucking funeral!" Simple words, but enough to get feet tapping and the crowd moving along. Another shout out for the bass player, he looked and played the part. A quality set with 'Sometimes I Feel Like a Disgrace' being a personal highlight.

In all fairness Flies on You didn't do much for me. Lyrically weak with little variation, I was left a bit bored. Time outside for a fag and to discuss the wonders of epilepsy with other lucky sufferers.

Shrug were next on and it's incredible how little they've changed since I last saw them back in 2000? 2001? Who knows. As the person next to me said, it was probably the same set. But that wasn't necessarily a bad thing. They know what they like, what works, and what entertains. For those that have seen the band before, you know what to expect. For those that haven't... well, what can you say. Good-time viewing, theatrical shenanigans and some decent music thrown into the mix for good measure.

Rob kept it interesting with a variety of wigs, hats and masks, whilst I

BIG FIGURE PROMOTIONS PRESENTS



THE MEMBRANES

SHRUG FLIES ON YOU

PELLETHEAD

THE MAGICK GODMOTHERS

FRIDAY 18th. NOVEMBER 6.00PM DOORS
TICKETS £10 ADVANCE / £12 ON THE NIGHT
SEE TICKETS / VENUE & USUAL AGENTS

THE
WESTGARTH
99 SOUTHFIELD ROAD
MIDDLESBROUGH
TS1 3EZ
07973 684719
bigfigurepromotions.co.uk



did my best to count the number of band members on stage. They went down well and was good to see them in full flow once again.

The Membranes are a band I know little about. But I did my YouTube research beforehand and it paid off. 'Do the Supernova' sounded as good live as it does on record and there were plenty of other tunes which I enjoyed a lot more due to a bit of listening beforehand.

Parking myself right at the front, I got to join in with the singing and enjoyed John Robb's tales of the last time he'd played up north. Not that he could remember much. Signs of a good night out?

The drummer barely broke out into a sweat yet kept the set tight as you like and allowed the boys free reign to entertain the crowd. To brand them a punk band would be lazy, but the influences are on show. At times it felt more like watching a 'performance' than a gig - and it was hard to take your eyes off the front man as he danced around, bass in hand, and made the most of what the stage had to offer.

Once again, a great night, at a great venue, put on by great people. Long may the Westgarth continue.

S.B.





FAVE ALBUMS:

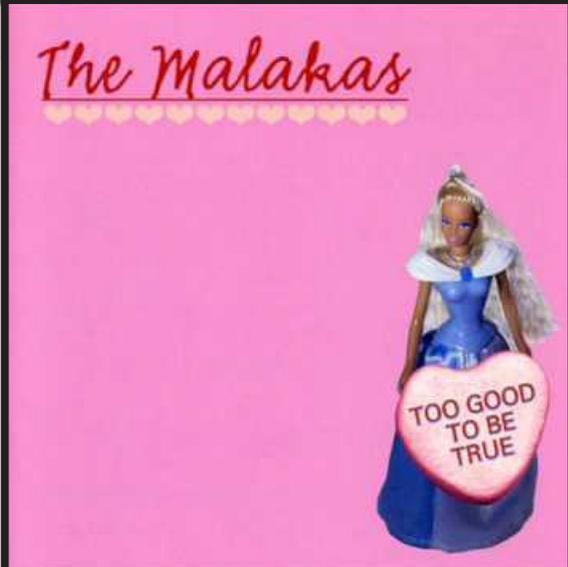
My favorite 2 albums are Cranford Nix and the Malakas "Too Good to be True", and Jonathan Richman and The Modern Lovers 1976 first album. I wanted to say an album by Roky Erickson but my favorite stuff of his are on EPs and singles, not LPs.

Cranford totally rules on this LP because all the songs rule. The stories pack crazy amounts of funny stuff into lines about driving your life straight through a plate glass window pretty much all the time. With the killer melodies. Suicide or Alcohol is your choice while having a good time singing about it.

Jonathan writes songs that fully take you into his world that also is packed with loads of funny shit. The monotone groove kicks so much ass that it sounds melodic. Drop out of Boston University - or else.

Both albums keep coming up with the stuff you really wanna hear.

A.C.



The Malakas

TOO GOOD
TO BE
TRUE



WE SHALL OVERCOME EVENT:

In 2015, a collective of musicians, artists, activists and other concerned individuals decided to get together and put on a series of shows right across the country, in order to make their voices heard and do something to try and help those facing financial hardship.

Gigs were organised, events set up and donations collected. The project proved a huge success (an estimated £125,000 worth of cash, clothing, food etc was raised) and this year, between October 3-9, similar events took place.

Like everywhere else, the North East of England played its part and a number of established venues around the region rolled up their sleeves. we decided to speak to a couple of the pubs that were able to get involved.

First up John, owner of the Golden Smog, one of Stockton's quirkiest and best-loved little boozers. Quite unlike anything else the town has to offer.

How were the acts selected?

People volunteered, we put a post on Facebook and chatted to people who came in and people gave us their time and talent for free to help the cause. All the acts volunteered time

free of charge, not even free drinks!

How did the Golden Smog get involved in the project?

We saw Joe Solo at Stockton Calling in 2015 and have followed him on social media since then, we saw what he was doing and wanted to be involved so we had our first We Shall Overcome last year and then it went so well, we did it again in 2016.

The pub's pretty small and cosy at the best of times! How did you manage to accommodate such an event?

We got a temporary event notice for the alley and the bands played in our very impressive (?) gazebo that me and Matt knocked together on the morning! Ste and Chris from Tees Music Alliance lent us and set up all the PA stuff and Matt Thompson from The Ale Team (group of hardened regulars) helped us set up again just out of the goodness of his heart!

Why did you think it was important for the pub to get involved?

The Smog is more than a pub, it is a community, people are always bringing things in for one another, bringing food in, helping each other out and I knew that our Smoggies would be really up for helping people less fortunate and those hit by auster-

ity. As I expected, both years have been amazing, raising loads of cash and people bringing a HUGE amount of goods and clothes for the Hebron Church Food Bank in Stockton. I could go on a political rant here but I don't think anyone wants to read that.

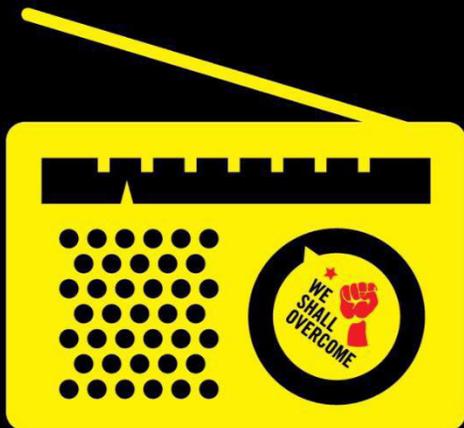
The one-day line up included:

- Sundogs (We were there first 'gig' and they were brilliant, Ste and Laura
- Frederick Branson
- Mean Disposition Blues n BoogieBand
- Andy X
- Karen Lester
- Pierre et Ju aka The Hardwick Social
- Punk Buddha
- Freeman - from Mill Lane Management
- David Benjamin
- Mary Davidson - from Mill Lane Management

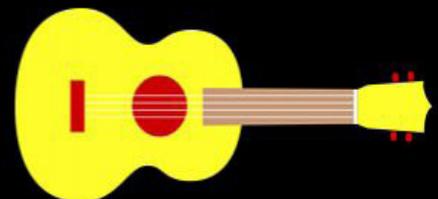
Then we had a quick natter with Shelly Allan, the Manager and one of the licences of Darlington's The Quakerhouse. Famed for its real ale and rowdy live music, it seems only natural that this place got itself involved.

How did The Quakerhouse get involved in the project?

The Quakerhouse got involved after Joe Solo came to perform at the pub around three years ago. Since then we've kept in touch and when the first WSO was mentioned last year



OCTOBER 3-9th 2016
Anti-austerity and Pro-Community.
A raised fist and a helping hand.





we jumped at the opportunity to get involved and support our local community.

How did you decide to select the acts?

The acts all wanted to be involved in WSO, in fact many others did too..

Why did you think it was important for your pub to get involved?

Making my brain hurt.. In my head I can't imagine not getting involved because of the mess the government is causing ... but as a publican I can't get involved in politics.

The Quakerhouse is pretty well-known for putting on gigs. What made the We Shall Overcome event different from other concerts?

The main difference for the WSO gigs was that we asked folks to donate food / sanitary items / cash for entry, usually all our gigs are free

I see the pub has an 'Overall pub of the year' certificate hanging proudly on its wall. What that all about?

Our pub of the year awards are from CAMRA (The Campaign for Real Ale). We have been town and overall winner in Darlington for 13 of the last 15 years. We've also been the regional winner once and runner up twice. X

Line up (spread over one week) included:

- Phil the Pipes Intros Quiz
- The Alex Fawcett Band
- Knuckle Eddz
- DJ Shagalicious' Disco Against Austerity
- Acoustic Night with Phil Cox, Jayne Beacher, The Heavily Brothers, The Old Age Travellers plus spoken word from Chris Stewart (AKA The Sideburned Poet)
- Thatchers Bush supported by Gram Baker

Big shout out to all those who got involved in the event and to John and Shelly for taking a few moments of their time to reply to my constant nagging for answers!

The only WSO event I managed to get along to was the TV Smith gig in Boro. You can read my drunken review of that later on in the zine.

S.B.

DARLINGTON
ANTI-AUSTERITY AND PRO-COMMUNITY.
A RAISED FIST AND A HELPING HAND.
#WSO2016 #WESHALLOVERCOME

**FRI 7TH OCT
8PM IN THE BAR
DJ SHAGALICIOUS
'DISCO'S AGAINST
AUSTERITY'
ENTRY BY DONATION**

PICCOLLAGE

CONCERT:

Cellar Door

The Green Room 09/09/16

Not a bad gig to kick off with to fair. Back in Stockton for five weeks and get invited out the the Green Room to see Cellar Door plying their stuff on stage.

I wasn't really sure what to expect (musically or in terms of venue) but I was well impressed. For a start, it cost nothing. Secondly, I got a can of Strongbow put in my hand free of charge. Who can fault that?

We timed it just right, the band taking to the stage just as we chinked glasses and began making our way to the front. The first song set the scene for what would follow - heavy Doors influence with plenty of stoner rock thrown in for good measure.

By the second and third song, plenty of heads were nodding along and

feet were tapping. Being a bass player - and being the first gig I've seen for over two months - I was pretty much focussed on the rhythm section, but there were quite a few times when the two guitarists caught my attention. There were plenty of moments they battled against each other and times in the set when they seemed to 'click' just perfectly'.

The 'Doors' / stoner rock influences were clearly there but there were flashes of late-era Husker Du in parts which also gave these boys an extra edge, and which certainly grabbed my attention. I was well impressed.

These lads are young but have been playing together a couple of years. You can see their enthusiasm and the love for what they're doing - and that goes a long way on the stage.

Thing is, I wasn't meant to be at this gig tonight. I was sat round the corner in The Wasp's Nest one minute, then the next being dragged round to see this band I had never heard of before. I was also extremely im-



pressed with the venue. I'd heard a lot about it but this was my first time witnessing for myself.

There was apparently another band on after Cellar Door but I didn't stick around to see them (apologies). This was due to a combination of spilling my mate's red wine all over the floor and also leaving my house keys in another pub (don't ever come out drinking with me).

Next time I see bands are playing there, I'll be down. Ten out of ten to Stockton. I'm hoping there will be more of the same in the future.

S.B.

NO SUCH THING AS HEROS:

I read about it all the time - back in the day record sleeves used to define who you were. I mean that carrying your favourite 12" record to school gave you a form of identity, a badge around your neck, a brand and a feeling of pride.

I don't class myself as 'old' but it's a question that needs to be asked. Do kids today have the same feeling? Does listening to your favourite songs on an iPhone give you the same amount of enjoyment? I doubt it does.

I'm from the 'CD generation'. So I remember lending out CDs to mates and getting theirs in return. It was the best way of finding new music. But, like an LP, it was more than that. It was more than just the music. It was about a product - the

music and the art work and something special.

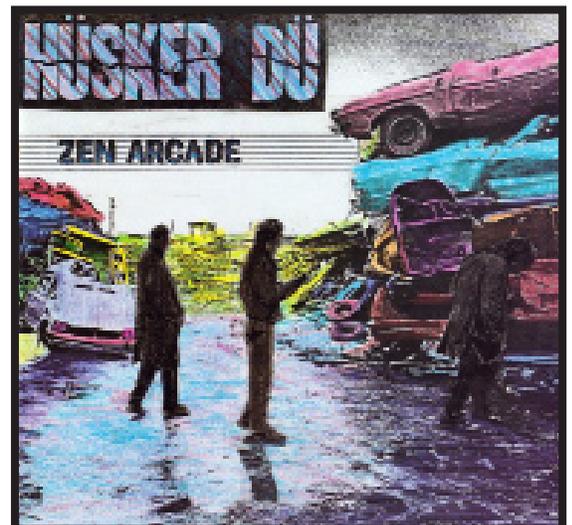
Sadly, I don't see that any more. It's just the way music distribution has changed. Perhaps most people don't give a fuck, but I do. I miss buying a product or holding a

CD with a cover photo or artwork in my hand. There are countless examples where the album's artwork is as important as the music included on it: The Stone Roses, Abbey Road, Zen Arcade, The Wall, to name but a handful.

There are thousands of 'iconic' album sleeves, but I'm not talking about these. I'm talking more about sleeves

which are an essential part of the package and as important as the music included inside them. Unfortunately, it's far too down the line to even bother trying to change it.

J.G.





It's always nice to be thrown a wildcard and that's exactly what happened whilst having a ciggy one

Wednesday evening round the back of Stockton's Wasp's Nest. Somewhere in the distance I could hear drumming and a hypnotic bass line. and I decided to investigate further. A quick look round the corner led me to the Green Room where I found Dead Moon Lizard King hammering away on their instruments during one of their practices.

With little info on this Middlesbrough stoner rock band online, I thought why not investigate further still. Here are the results:

Can you give me a bit of history about the band.

The band started last year as a jam between myself (Metal Dan), Kev (drummer) and our ex-guitarist, Dale. Just three, like-minded musicians seeing what kind of music we could create. The musical chemistry was apparent straight away and we started jamming regularly. After playing a few gigs as a three piece we decided we would sound bet-

ter with a bassist and added Patto to the mix. The band continued to develop through gigging and song-writing until the dynamic changed

again with the departure of Dale. Joe quickly stepped up to take his place allowing us to reach the point where we feel we've honed our sound enough to commit it to record and unleash our creation upon the world and that's where we're at today. We're currently in the process of recording our debut EP which we hope to release before the end of the year.

Apart from the obvious Doors references, who are your main influences?

The Lizard King part was actually more a tongue in cheek reference to David Icke's reptilian overlord theories and the Jim Morrison reference was just a happy coincidence. We've been described as a cross between Slayer and Fleetwood Mac which helps sum up the variety of influences we draw from. The core of our sound definitely comes from bands like Sabbath, Electric Wizard, Mastodon and Melvins. We try and throw some weirder stuff in there to keep things interesting inspired by the likes of Mr. Bungle, Bjork and Sigur Ròs.

The NE scene seems pretty healthy right now. What are your thoughts on it?

The heavier music scene could definitely do with a breath of fresh air. There's a strong lack of decent promoters and venues, at least at the grass roots level, that deal with the kind of music we play. That's why we tend to do more midlands gigs where the doom/stoner scene is thriving at the moment. Joel at Idle Promotions is definitely doing the area a favour though and is one of the few promoters who'll take a chance on us. I think a lot of the time we get overlooked for gigs at the risk of us being too

heavy when generally, our sound is varied enough to be appreciated by all types of music lovers.

Who are the best bands in the area?

Our favourites are; The NX, Sanity Check, Mr. Treacle, Tripper Gore and us (obviously).

What have been the best gigs you've played so far, and why?

I'd have to say the time we played The Green Room last year for the Sonic Union all dayer. We had absolutely no idea how we'd go down on the varied bill but we somehow managed to have a very receptive crowd spilling out of the doors. We were all completely on form that night and it felt incredible to see people notice.

How come you chose Green Room to practice in?

We tend to flit from practice room to practice room depending on where is available but Green Room is the most local to each of us. It helps that they're well priced and look after their equipment.

Have you done any recordings? Are you planning on any?

We're currently in the process of self-recording our first EP which is shaping up quite nicely. There's only a few more parts to record before it's ready for mixing and mastering. We also have nearly an album's worth of material ready to jump into straight after that.

What are the band's future plans?

Our immediate plans are to finish recording which will be followed by a release show and hopefully a tour. After that we'll keep churning out the riffs and pushing for world domination.

Anything else you'd like to add?

It doesn't matter if you believe in Satan. What's important is that he believes in us.

S.B.



INTERVIEW:

PelletHead

Pellethead is a band that needs little introduction. With 24 years of experience, countless gigs and some John Peel recognition under their belts, it's fair to say these boys have seen more than most local acts.

The first time I saw Pellethead play was a decade and a half ago in The Cornerhouse supporting Shrug. It was an incredibly hazy evening, but I do remember leaving the club impressed by their energy and care-free edginess. Seeing them recently at The Westgarth and... well... it's fair to say that not much has changed.

So when the lads invited me down to their practice room a couple of weeks back to do an interview with them, the offer was too good to turn down.

Tucked away somewhere in between Newport Road and Parliament Road, this is my old stomping ground and I

spent manys a night back in the day crawling home from the Arena after a good skinful. To walk these streets on a cold, dark windy evening once again was a real trip down memory lane.

Arriving at Lorne Street Studios, I'm greeted by Shaun (bass / vox) who's finishing off a fag as Alan (guitar / vox), Richie (guitar / vox) and Graham (drums) turn up. After brief greetings, they hike their gear upstairs before all heading back outside for a bit of a pre-practice chat...

One of the things that has always struck me about Pellethead is their raucousness and almost chaotic approach to their gigs. The best way to describe them is the sound of a band teetering on the edge of a cliff, yet somehow managing to maintain their balance without loosing their grip. If that makes sense?

"The skill we've learnt over the years is not to panic. In the past, if we made mistakes, we used to stop playing. But nowadays, we've learnt that if we fuck up, we just continue and don't stop," says Alan.

"When you do things by feelings, people think it's really good," explains Richie. "It's musicianship of a different kind. You can work off the feeling of the other players. It's a desperate struggle! We don't worry about the timing of the songs but go on feeling. We're not replicating the records live."

"We're incapable of replicating the records," confirms Alan.

Anyone who's watched the boys perform in the past

will know exactly what to expect. A cross between The Fall and Monkey Island, their brand of no-wave punk is both catchy and shambolic and according to one of the audience members I spoke to at their recent Westgarth gig, they're the best band on Teesside right now.

"Due to me working and sometimes living in different parts of Europe we've had to adjust to less frequent and more sporadic practises," Alan tells me. "It does mean it can take absolutely ages to get songs together. In our early days, because we have three songwriters we would knock out new songs at a rate of knots. These days we have to coax new songs into existence."

"We're not bothered by what people think," adds Shaun. "We used to have the 'angry sessions' around 1997 where we had 9am rehearsals."

Alan elaborates. "The angry sessions were just when we couldn't book a practise at a reasonable time so we were forced into early morning practises. This meant we were all grumpy. It resulted in fiery sessions and yes we still play a couple of songs from that era. The songs were probably more spiky a bit more percussive."

Richie tells me the band don't want to be boring or sterile and that it's important to stay "slightly on the edge". "We've learnt on the job. We go in bravely and don't worry about things," he adds. Perhaps this is how it has maintained its solid local following over such a long period. But from digging around online it's clear Pellethead have acquired fans from further afield too.

"We've done a lot of concerts in Czech Republic," say Shaun. "At one of the gigs I had to sign one of my socks!"

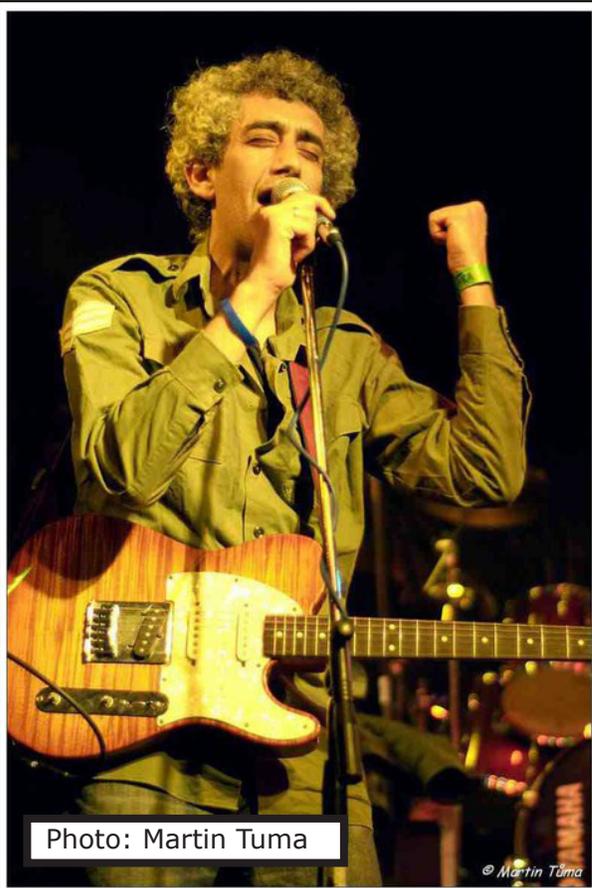


Photo: Martin Tuma

© Martin Tuma

"There's a funny story behind that," explains Alan. "Shaun used to jump off the stage a lot and one time he did it with no shoes. This girl started stroking his socks. She couldn't really speak English so she came over with her boyfriend and got someone to translate for us. It turned out she wanted to keep the sock and wanted it signed. She had some kind of foot fetish!"

"We've been [to the Czech Republic] three times and had audiences of about 10 people. Then a promoter said to us 'I'll put you on with this band called Visací Zámek.' We were playing in this Soviet-era social club and we thought it would be dead. But about 600 people turned up! Visací Zámek then invited us to go on tour with them."

Despite approaching its 25th year anniversary (expect a few rowdy celebrations next year folks), the band has always kept its core set of members. However, there have been a few drummers in the hot seat along the way, with Graham being the latest to pick up the sticks.

"Richie and Shaun were playing a party without me or our then drummer, Dan. Graham literally came out of the audience to sit in on drums with zero practise and never having seen the band ever," says Alan.

"Yes I didn't know any songs apart from the chorus of McGuire, which

Shaun sang to me when I met him briefly at a New Years party," Graham tells me. "I hadn't played drums for years when I was watching the gig at the Westgarth in March, and after having a rather angry day I thought fuck it, I'll get up and play. It was all improvised and obviously involved listening to and tuning into the other guys. Whether deliberate or subconscious IOUs, I tend not to listen to songs we are learning until I have tried them myself so that I play it how I feel rather than how someone else played it, so I suppose the way I have started playing with the band is how it continues. Obviously we get tighter but there's always the element of jazz (which I don't really like btw) where we are following each other rather than playing by rote. I love playing in the band, it's pretty laid back but everyone still takes it seriously and are in it purely for the thrill of gigging."

"Graham knew what we were all about right away. We've not rehearsed much together and he's done a great job," Richie confirms.

What about the best stuff going on locally at the moment? The general consensus is that the NE has a pretty good scene going on.

Shaun tells me The Approved are his recommended band to look out for. "I got them to play at my birthday and they are one of my favourite [<-spelling deliberate!] bands. Whenever I'm feeling down if I hear them it lifts my spirits. They are an uplifting band."

"The Best band is Sorry Escalator," says Richie. I like them cos they love their (guitar) music and wear their hearts on their sleeves and make a wonderful shoegaze soundscape which I enjoy."

"The NE music scene is actually in quite good shape," Alan agrees. "A



Photo (and cover): Dave Shaw

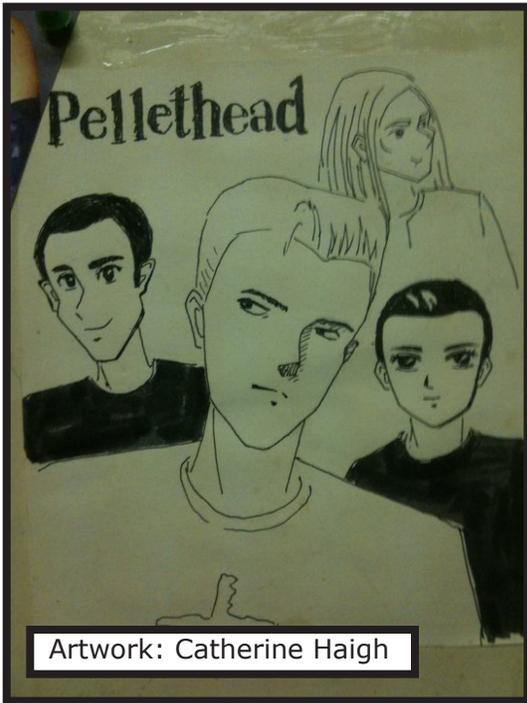
lot of towns with strong little scenes. Maybe could do with more bands doing something off-the-map original."

We retire back upstairs and crack open a beer as the boys tune up their instruments and knock out a couple of tunes before I run off for the bus. Any plans to record anything in the near future?

"We are recording, mixing and mastering two songs for a vinyl single on 5th and 6th of November at the Studio in Hartlepool," says Alan. "Our first vinyl this millennium."

"We are celebrating our 25th birthday next year and wanted to release some vinyl to celebrate. We also recorded an album's worth of songs while Michael Gillham was still drumming for us and we are going to get the mixing done on those and do something with them next year too. Maybe more vinyl."

S.B.



Artwork: Catherine Haigh



CONCERT:

Rev Rev Rev

The Green Room 17/10/16

the back streets of Stockton is a bit of a coup.

But it's a slow start and if truth be told you can't help but think they'd have been better suited to the support slot. Still, the audience sticks around and after a few tunes they start to get into the swing of things with singer Laura chopping and changing between keyboard and guitar throughout.

They play a lazy brand of "shoegaze meets stoner rock" (thanks NE Volume) and towards the end of the set there are a few heavier / rockier songs thrown into the mix to spice things up a little.

I don't get a chance to speak to the band after their set but from looking at their Facebook page you get an idea of how they felt it went: "A huge thanks to Stockton-on-tees and Edinburgh folks! Every single night reminds us why we love playing UK..."

S.B

It's cold, it's rainy and I'm bored. It's also a school night. And what better way to celebrate than by heading into town to see what's on offer?

Being a Monday, I'm not very hopeful. But a quick scour around online confirmed there was in fact a gig in the Green Room and my presence was required. So a quick shower, a bite to eat and the next bus into Stockton...

With an hour to kill, I park myself at the bar in The Wasp's Nest with a pint of Addlestones' cider and riffle through a couple of editions of The Crack and NE Volume. It's been a while since I've had the pleasure of reading The Crack and it's as big a waste of time as I remember. But to be fair NE Volume is a very decent read. Interviews with loads of acts (Sleaford Mods, The Pigeon Detectives, Alistair James), plenty of features (Cassette Store Day, We Shall Overcome 2016, Twisterella) and even a piece on Rev Rev Rev. I've always found free mags in pubs a complete waste of time but to be fair I'll be picking up edition 17 when it comes out.

Anyway I digress. Finish up my pint and pop across to the Green Room just in time to see The Approved take to the stage to entertain the handful of folk who have turned up. Having never seen these local lads play before, I'm not really sure what to expect. But two songs in and

it's pretty clear where they're coming from. Dirty garage-blues with a quality set that get feet tapping and heads bopping. I don't remember the drummer's name but he never lets up from the get go and drives the songs well. It's solid, it's enjoyable and it's straight to the point. What more can you ask for from a band? By the end of the set there's about 15 folk in the audience - not bad for a Monday me thinks.

It doesn't take long for the turn around and soon enough Rev Rev Rev are behind their instruments and starting on their first song. Hailing from Italy, the group have received plenty of international recognition and the gig is part of their 'Droning Flowers Tour' which takes them to locations such as Edinburgh, Nottingham, London, Manchester, Lille and Strasbourg. So to see them in



Photos: Brian Barnes

MEMBRANES MEMORIES:

If you want to be a proper band, a band that really means something you have to earn the respect of people in the towns and cities like Middlesbrough, away from the metropolitan perfume and deep in the post industrial these are cities were fierce music fans hang onto music like barnacles to high decibel rocks. Music really means something in these places, it's not an idle plaything or a fashionable whim but the very lifeblood.

We have had many forays into the city over the years either with the Membranes or with Goldblade, some of our loyalist supporters have been based in the city. True to tradition we never play a gig and spend the night in the dressing room and wander the surrounding streets seeking out quirky footnotes or adventure. One time we found the old venue in Stockton where they have put stars in the pavement of some of the big bands that played there like the

Beatles, Rolling Stones and trex, I stood there for an hour an imagined the now boarded up Palace of fun as the epicenter of the worlds pop culture the night the Beatles came to town - the number one pop band in the planet rushing into the building in Stockton, the fierce white light of popular culture in this now faded venue, I thought about the sweat and the memories and the screaming fans now in their late sixties and their own memories of the night when they were also at the heart of pop culture now all dust and memories.

Another time we walked down the road and found the recently closed ayresome park and climbed over the surrounding wall and onto the derelict terraces and I thought the same things, what was once the heart of the community was now just bricks and mortar and cracked concrete, what was once the roar of thousands of voices was now the drip drip drip

of water from the endless rain. And it's these memories that even in our micro scale we are part of, that flash of electricity in venues, that attempt to resurrect the spirit with guitars and ideas, every band that plays in every dingy pub is the same, attempting to raise the freak flag and grasp the magic and even more important in the audience turning up early to see every band and still lost in the music.

J.R.



A few weeks ago a good mate of mine came over from the Netherlands to see what Teesside had to offer. Before she booked the flight, I did warn her that Stockton might not live up to the standards of the other places we'd seen before (Berlin, Madrid, Bratislava, Edinburgh, etc. etc...)

But to be fair, my fears were short lived. A few pints on Boro's Southfield Road then a quick taxi to Stockton were enough to show that we have a cracking nightlife over here. But before reaching our chosen desination of KU BAR, we were ushered by a friend into one of the town's most interesting pubs - The Leeds Hotel.

Don't get me wrong, it wasn't my first choice of venues but after our crew parked up at the bar and got a few pints in, we soon got into the flow. The barmaid even came around with a tray of free shots for us all to indulge ourselves in!

I've never been a karaoke fan but given the circumstances I requested The Cure and gave a damn good turn with the mic. We also scoured the playlist a few times for a couple of Dutch classics but there were none on offer. I still feel hard done by...

KU BAR proved a big hit (I think we even returned there the next night for more of a dance) and rediscovering Stockton in general has been great. I'm genuinely amazed how many mad little boozers there are. In the past few weeks I've visited The Wasps Nest, Musiclounge, Golden Smog, The Sun Inn, The Green Room, The Looking Glass, Storytellers and a few others which I can't even remember the names of. To put it bluntly, for a town of its size it's not doing too bad and Utrecht has a lot to live up to.

S.B.

ELEVATOR MUSIC FOR THE MASSES:

CONCERT:

The Likkor Men

Musiclounge 17/09/16

I was told great things about The Likkor Men. I was told I wouldn't be disappointed. I was told to expect a cross between The Stooges and Slayer. I was told they'd leave me wanting more.

Surprising then that I could find anyone to come down to see them with me (after all, who wants to be stood in a bar they don't know on their own) but I did, and it was well worth it.

But seeing as they'd turned up with a decent support crew in tow, let's start at the top.

Tim Oxnard was first up on the stage



sporting his guitar and a great attitude. Kicking off with a few improv tunes, he moved onto 'Truth Bomb' and 'The Road I Take' - two songs which kept me captivated. The last time I saw Tim onstage was with The High Plane Drifters, so to see him churn out some of his own acoustic solo tunes was very enjoyable. "I managed to muscle my way into the line up tonight," he told us all. And here's to more of that.

Next up were The Death Owls, who were a bit disappointing. Maybe it was a bad day at the office, maybe it was a problem just squeezing them all onto the stage, but they did nothing for me. By the time I'd counted all the guitarists on stage (was it four or was it five?) I was ready for a fag or two outside. Perhaps more. Good job then that Krome were ready to pick up their instruments soon afterwards and show the crowd how rock 'n' roll should be done. These lads battled it out for floor-space but did so with a good mixture of energy and style and the crowd were up enjoying it.

A proper rock 'n' roll vibe - catchy tunes, with a healthy smattering of punk. Yep, they were worth the £2 entry fee alone.

Feeling fired-up and ready for The Likkor Men, we got to the bar to fight off the rush. Just back in time to hear the sound check (or was it the first song? I was too drunk to differentiate by this point.) But regardless, The Stooges influence was clear from the off - dark, degrading and downright raucous, these lads have obviously earned their stripes over the years and knew how to get the best out of the audience. I don't remember any of the song titles on offer but each one had me up and nodding along with a dirty sneer on my face, wondering just how the next song would match the one currently being played.

I think there was an encore but I'm not sure, the set meshed into one and I was too busy bopping around and telling all and sundry what a great exhibition they were witnessing. Top class.

Before the gig, the Music Lounge Facebook page promised "A very interesting and tasty mix of music" and a night that would be "one to remember!" I can't really confirm the second part - mostly due to too many trips to the bar - but an interesting mix it most certainly was. Fair play to the venue for sticking so many diverse acts on in one evening and charging next to nothing to get in to see them all on stage.

S.B.



Photos: Craig Broadbent

I recently saw Billingham's Charlie Thomas support TV Smith and thought he was class. I fired a few questions his way and he was good enough to answer them. Here they are.

When and why did you decide to perform solo?

I started to perform solo just over four years ago after I met a local promoter through friends. I had been writing songs on and off for years and I suppose I had been going through a bit of a creative period. I played a song for him at a party, and we got talking. I had previously went to one of his events and was very impressed with the style of original singer songwriters he had performing at these events and I wanted to be a part of it. A few weeks later I was invited to play and have been performing ever since.

How do you go about writing your songs?

I have tried various ways of song writing, I used to write songs by strumming a chord progression with an acoustic guitar and a vocal melody would pop in my head. I have a bank of poems and lyrics that I might try with that melody sometimes it works sometimes it doesn't. I used to have a rule that if I can't remember the basis of a song then it probably wasn't any good. I now however tend to record what I refer to as sketches and I may build on them later. Since I have been performing I tend to write using an electric guitar with a distinct idea for a song and write the lyrics as I go. I also see many of my songs as work in progress, evolving over time, changing them from minor to major chord progressions for example or changing the tempo. I enjoy this freedom as a solo artist and performer.

Who are your main influences?

When I first started writing the artists that inspired were Kurt Cobain and Jim Morrison. They were the

first to make me want to write songs. Likewise, I have always been drawn towards and admired the work of singer songwriters as opposed to guitarists. Now I would say my biggest influences are Lou Reed as a solo artist and of course his early work in the Velvet Underground, as well as Patti Smith, Nick Cave and Jonathon Richman. All amazing songwriters. I also draw huge influence from American beat writers such as Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Hubert Selby Jr. and Charles Bukowski. Basically I am and have always been fascinated with many aspects of art, and counter culture that came out of 20th century America.

What have been your most memorable performances?

My most memorable performance to date was at The Green Room in Stockton supporting Blue Rose Code in 2014. It was my first gig in a music venue as opposed to a pub and lots of folk came to watch me play. More recently I have enjoyed supporting the likes of TV Smith and Dead Men Walking – artists who were in my record collection when I was a kid. I also performed at the Old Sawmill Garden Party in September sharing a stage with my friends Silver Trees. That was pretty special.

Where are the best local venues?

Personally I like to play at any venues that have dedicated original music nights really. But it's more than just the venue on Teesside, it's the promoters who curate and put events on that attract the right kind of crowd. If I had to choose two it would be The Fishermans' Arms Hartlepool and the Westgarth Social Club Middlesbrough.

What is Billingham like in terms of music?

Billingham is my hometown but I have never played a gig there. It's not really known as a place to play original music.

Any improvements you could make?

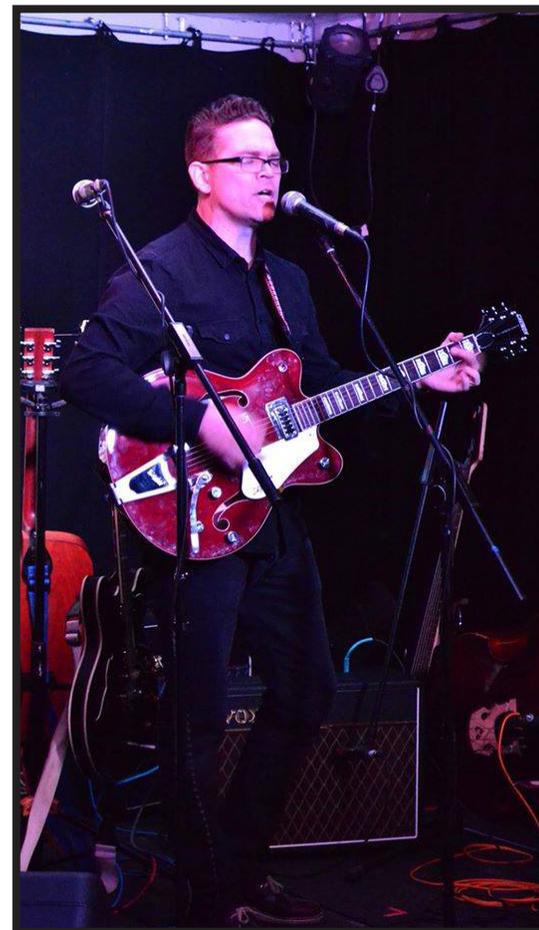
Yeh loads! Overall I think the longer you play for the better you get at playing live. I enjoy what I do and hopefully people who come to watch me do too.

Any future plans?

I have two gigs coming up in February supporting punk folk band Driven Serious at The Green Room Stockton and punk band Fleckt Pets at The Westgarth Social Club. I am also looking forward to supporting The Urban Voodoo Machine at the Westgarth in September. Hopefully the New Year will also bring recording and festival opportunities.

www.facebook.com/www.charliethomas.co.uk

S.B.



CONCERT:

TEESSIDE PUNK FESTIVAL

Westgarth 24/09/16

THE fading fabric of Westgarth SC in Middlesbrough stands in great contrast to the affluence of the University of Teesside Campus based across the road. Set back off Southfield Road the club has been in the town since 1921. It was refurbished in 1964 and houses three rooms: a snooker room with two tables; a larger upstairs room for functions and downstairs a much smaller room with a smaller bar and for today it is the home of Teesside Punk Festival.

Punk Rock in Middlesbrough has had an interesting history. It commenced in November 1976 when the Rock Garden opened on Newport Road. It was a good 10 mins walk from the town centre and early bands who played there included Motorhead, The Vibrators, The Stranglers (a live recording exists), The Clash & the Sex Pistols (billed as Acne Rebble). Everyone claims they were there but as the venue only held 450 it's stretching the imagination somewhat especially as the punk phenomenon was still growing. The Damned had supported the Flamin' Groovies at the nearby Redcar Coatham Bowl in Nov 1976 and came back a couple of weeks later to play the old Teesside Poly (now rechristened and refurbished as a University). The venue lasted five years before the second generation of skinheads had scared everyone off not enough folk were coming through its doors. The Rock Garden being situated out of town only opened when they had a band to play there. It closed in August 1981.

The Rock Garden is cherished by many of those who frequented it and there is a Facebook group set up by one of today's promoters Steve Harland back in 2009 it has over 1,400 members. "Blame The Damned," says Steve, "they started it all back in March 1979 for me." Steve, along with Dave Griffiths and Gary McGhie

set up Rock Garden Re-generated and staged a reunion in Sept 2010. "We all contributed an equal share," recalls Steve. It was sold out a month before it took place but not at the old venue – now a dance club with a ropey reputation, the owners weren't keen on having their venue taken over by loads of ageing punks and simply ignored any formal methods of communication. Steve switched his attentions to Stockton's Georgian Theatre – he was from there so he knew the area well. Both him and Dave met Paul Burns from Tees Music Alliance and discussed their plans. The idea was to have six bands from back in the day playing 30 min sets. They were inundated with offers to play from the likes of The Amazing Space Frogs, Blitzkreig Bop, No Way & Robot Youth. Burns, to his credit, agreed it was a good idea.

In the eighties Middlesbrough had its own music collective that kept things going on a DIY basis upstairs at the Empire/Southfield Hotel – bands like the Buy Off The Bar, Chumbawamba, Darling Buds, Dog Faced Hermans, No Means No, The Ex, Snuff and local heroes like Pelthead, Spit The Pips and Shrug. People promoting live music because they wanted to hear something different they kept the flag flying for a long time. Into the late nineties and a younger crowd gathered to promote hardcore gigs at venues like The Acklam who kept the momentum going. The late Robert Slavery produced a fanzine called Codeye based in Park End in Middlesbrough, sadly Robert passed away far too young. He was well thought of though by anyone who came into contact with him though and he promoted

music enough to write his own fanzine at a time when it was probably less fashionable to do so.

Six years on and Steve is still promoting live music – Dave is too but Gary is long gone. "Gary quit in May 2013 after Ruts DC. Me and Dave lasted until December of that year and finished with sold out gigs for Theatre of Hate and 999. That was the end of Rock Garden Re-generated, others came along and jumped on the bandwagon. Me and Dave promoted The House of Love together and then went our separate ways. We had done 21 gigs together which was 20 more than we thought we would do! I did a couple of gigs on my own, promoted one-offs with others and then hitched up with lifelong friend Barry Simpson. Barry thought there was money to be made from it. After six gigs he walked away." Steve then hitched up with Martin Mathers, the co-promoter of today's punk festival. "Me and Martin have promoted 39 gigs in two and a half years – we have had success with the likes of Punishment of Luxury, Sleaford Mods and The Rezillos (twice), we break even on a few and lose on others but most gigs we subsidise out of our own pockets." Saturday's gig was Steve's 64th in six years. "We both work full

BIG FIGURE PROMOTIONS PRESENTS

TEESSIDE PUNK FESTIVAL

JADED EYES

THE FILTH

THE RELITICS

NO WAY

THE BREAKDOWNS

MY RULES

NOSEBLEED

THE ANTISEPTICS

HUNG LIKE JACK

THE GREG GINN EXPERIENCE

DEATH TO INDIE

RATTY & THE WATCHERS

ALIEN 8

SATURDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 11AM TO 11PM

£10 / £12 DOOR SEE TICKETS/VENUE & USUAL SOURCES



Photo: Steve Harland

time - it is an expensive hobby. If we aren't promoting we are usually at gigs ourselves. I never intended to do this amount of gigs but it becomes addictive. Live music was always a huge part of my life before I ever started promoting. I'm basically promoting my record collection to be honest."

Today's 13 band line-up costs £10 admission and includes bands travelling from as far afield as Leeds and Nottingham. "We wanted a mixture of old and new but it costs money to bring bands from other places" says Steve. "We saw The Breakdowns supporting the Flamin' Groovies in Leeds recently and had them up supporting Tav Falco's Panther Burns three weeks later."

My Rules re-invent the American hardcore songbook which is a little odd as they come from Durham. Blink and you would have missed them and after 15 mins they are off. Ratty & The Watchers are the first band to cause a reaction. The Sedgefield three-piece play a set that harks back to the melodic punk days of 1979/1981 - they play with confidence. Alien 8 were Green Day in disguise and their self-deprecating onstage banter seemed lost on most of the audience watching them.

Whereas Largacytl appeared to hate everyone and everything. Fuck me every song was sung in the same dark morose style. The contrast between them and the spoof tribute to Black Flag's Greg G!nn Experience was never more profound as they sped through their back catalogue at breakneck speed 'Rise Above, Gimme Gimme Gimme, Six Pack, Wasted, Nervous Breakdown & Jealous Again'. 20 minutes and just as many songs and they were gone for good - Largacytl please take note!

Next up were Darlington's Hung Like Jack - they played like a less frantic Leatherface and reminded me of those late 80s punk bands like a UK version of Fugazi/The Promise Ring which ain't no bad thing. Leeds-based Nosebleed were the first band to cause a real reaction. Dressed in matching garish cream suits and sounding not unlike The Hives they proceeded to play in the audience and soon had them forming a semi circle. They were great playing a form of garage rock that never goes out of date for me. Comparisons with The Franceens were accurate as the two singers/guitarist are brothers. A must-see band if you get the opportunity.

Newcastle's Death To Indie were a

nice surprise. The Tyneside five-piece wouldn't have looked out of place as their Manic Street Preachers - style material was well received definitely worth checking out when they come to your neighbourhood. Next up were The Breakdowns from Nottingham - wow they sounded so good and there is a definite Dolls/Thunders/Vibrators feel to their material. I love this stuff, so well done for the promoters to get them to come up and play.

Local heroes No Way followed them with their new singer John Bell, he looked a bit hesitant at first but soon warmed to the appreciative crowd. No Way's rhythm section remains constant. Paul Tattersall from The Amazing Space Frogs fills in on lead guitar and the new singer did the old songs justice. Sunderland's The Relitics followed with their female singer vaguely reminiscent of Pauline Murray from Penetration at times. She was quite animated at times and kept coming into the audience to dance, "It's Saturday night and I like to dance," she said, no one was arguing with her.

Thornaby's The Filth were playing their second gig of the day as they had played at a charity do in Darlington on the afternoon. Endo is a great lead singer and commands the stage. Back in his younger days he followed the UK Subs all over the world and it's amazing to see how much he himself sounds like Charlie Harper himself. They do a mixture of older and newer material - the new material sounds fresh and comes over good live.

Leeds-based Jaded Eyes finished the night off with their high octane American Hardcore influenced set. They were hear promoting their new album and they didn't disappoint. Their gravel voiced vocalist howled at the moon through every song. Then it was all over as quickly as it had begun.

The promoters seem happy enough - job done and start planning next year's line-up.

B.



On returning to Teesside I was keen to check out the new music venues that had opened and I had heard some good things about Stockton's very own Musiclounge.

After meeting Oliver whilst at a gig and hearing the sad tale of how his wife had tragically passed away after having opened the club together, I decided to ask the owner for a short interview.

A couple of reasons I was drawn to the venue was the fact it not only showcases both established acts and new talent (be it through concerts or the Tuesday night 'Busker Evenings'), but it also offers bands somewhere to practice when its doors are closed.

So, without further ado, let's see what Oliver had to say (bear-

ing in mind it was 3.30am at the time of writing...)

Can I ask why you and Heather decided to open Musiclounge?

Me and Heather decided to open musiclounge as a Base for good music and people originally a cafe / rehearsal / teaching space for music lovers.

My passion is music and I felt there was a need for a good venue bringing back the 60's 70's 80's and 90s to today.

How has Stockton's music scene developed over the last few years? I mean in terms of venues and new bands?

Venues and new bands have grown the past year as people seem to realise there is more to life than Internet and TV. The need for good face

to face socialising with decent music.

What have been the best bands you have hosted in your club?

Some of best bands have been Crease, Velvoir and Dan Patlansky. They blew the roof off tonight. Velvoir were on to a 70 strong crowd loving it.

The venue has rehearsal space for bands - how come you decided to do this?

I am a drum teacher and felt the rehearsal space offered another needed service - a decent place for bands to rehearse with decent equipment at a good price.

I see that Musiclounge offers 'teaching facilities'. What is that all about?

Musiclounge is a platform for local bands to grow. The Velvoir crowd has grown at every gig it is a vessel for promotion and happiness

What has been your favourite memory in your club?

My favorite memory in Musiclounge was with Heather and my son when the music put smile on our faces. I miss her more than ever and I gain strength in my son

If you could get one local band to play there, who would it be? And why?

One local band we have Velvoir. I also would like to get a big name such as Sterophonics unplugged or Feeder. I would love that big name - small venue. They all start small at first, it's where it all starts. More time and money needs to go into smaller venues as they are the backbone of our future and add to the economy and will bring happiness, socialising, de-stressing. We all need it.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Would like to add thank God for great family, friends and son and music. It keeps me strong and grateful.

S.B.



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THE PINK REVIEW:

A quick thought about reunions. You know how bands reunite after 20 years from the release of their one great album. They very often need to make sure their bank balance is right. Or they want to meet old mates - those crazy student halls Leeds '86 parties kind of thing. Or they just want to play some decent music still, you never know.

I've seen quite a few band reunions recently, some of them more exciting than others, some actually making your heart skip a tiny beat. Reunion gigs are filled with joy and madness and some nostalgia but

when it comes to recording some new material, drama very often crawls in. You spend countless hours anticipating new revelation that in fact turns out to be hardly any good. Do musicians develop after 20 years gap? Do they repeat the same sounds? Sadly in many cases, they actually turn backwards.

BUT, there are some revolutionaries, those who never did stop in all those seemingly silent years. I wanted to write this article about The Wolfhounds and how I saw them twice this year, and how smashing it was. My Canadian friend said he'd never seen such energy onstage ever before. Sounds exaggerated? Go and see The Vaselines live. Their mad chatter in between songs will make

you stop and listen. Their new albums are filled with relentless energy and amazing guitar works. Go and see The Close Lobsters, all those seemingly unknown bands that were once huge in their scene. See how great they still are. They have nothing left and nothing to lose. And it's not nostalgia fest, it's the pure joy of creating and sharing music, and they know how to do it best. There's no Spotify or Soundcloud needed.

I'm young, but it's more of a middle-aged angst that keeps me going, makes me feel like there is still hope in real music. And it's a rather sad view seeing teenagers struggling to find energy or rebel on stage. Without a cause.

W.D.

CONCERT:

The Fillers

Kubar 26/11/16

I've heard a few people saying they are unimpressed by Storytellers recently but I've never understood what the issue is. Free entry, reasonable drinks, decent vibe and a plethora of local gigs. Saturday saw us take a cheeky look inside before hitting Kubar - where we had a date with the dance floor - and a jolly good night it was too.

A couple of drinks and a packed out room stood singing along to a guy with an acoustic guitar, pumping out indie classics. Job done.

It's always easy to judge how long the queue at Kubar will be going by the number of folk in Storytell-



ers - getting it spot on is a fine art and one which can pay off dividends during the winter months. Once inside we were taken by surprise. The right-hand room was banging and it didn't take us long to realise the Killers tribute act were worth a watch.

Must have arrived mid-set but it was enough to catch plenty of the hits. Not a band I'd listen to on record but I imagine they'd be pretty storming on their day and after a few pints. Either way, the covers band did them justice. 'When You're Young', 'Mr Brightside' and one of the other classics ended the set and got me in the mood to shift through to the other room, dancing shoes at the ready..

Never seen a proper gig in Kubar before (god knows how - I spend enough of my money in the till there) but I'd be pretty interested in seeing a proper band up on stage belting out their tunes. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with a decent covers band (and these boys were great) but I'll definitely be coming down to see more.

Don't really remember how the rest of the night ended up. I'm sure we saw it out for the duration. Taxis were fought over and after-party drinks dismissed on the grounds of common sense. Fuck knows where that came from, but it was certainly for the best.

J.G.

the FILLERS

CONCERT:

TV Smith

Westgarth 07/10/16

I'll be very honest, I hadn't been to Middlesbrough for a night out for quite a while. I think the last time I'd ventured over was about 10 years ago, so the idea of going over to see a gig, in a pub I'd never been to before, on my own, wasn't the most exciting of prospects.

But let me say right now, I'm glad I made the effort. The night was put on by Stephen Harland as part of the WE SHALL OVERCOME events, to help generate awareness and help for Middlesbrough Food Bank and there was a good-feel vibe around the place, as if everyone involved knew they were helping out in some way.

From the second I walked in the Westgarth I was made welcome. A healthy mixture of familiar faces, drunken barflies and bands that were more than happy to stand and chat, reminded me why I love the NE so much.

I only caught the last couple of songs by The Golden Age of Nothing, but from what I saw they did themselves proud. No drummer, but the bassist kept a rock-steady beat while the band entertained with solid 80s-style synth pop tunes. But it was Billingham's Charlie Thomas who was the first to capture my at-

ention. He took to the mic like a kid at Xmas and his nostalgia-twined folk tunes were delivered with gusto and confidence. I had a good natter with him after his performance and organised an interview (which is hidden away somewhere inside these very pages).

I think the surprise act of the night was Ghost Signals who had travelled down from Newcastle to play their part. From the off they got the crowd on side with their early 90's goth-pop songs, reminiscent of The Cure or more frantic New Order. 'Trauma, Trauma, Trauma' was a tune that stood out and seemed to sum them up perfectly. Was a great band to prop the bar up to and tap my foot along with.

As expected, Pellethead stood up to the mark (is that even an idiom?) and gave it their all. Their off-kilter urgency and passion had the crowd onside from the off and as soon as The Grey Matters began, you could tell they were here to give it their all. Richie's Hawaiian-solo kept the song on track as Alan spewed out his rambling lyrics and from then it just got better. I'd waited a while to see these boys on stage again and they didn't disappoint. I wish I could reel out the whole set list but I can't. I'm hoping over the next few months I can change that.

But there's no denying that it was TV Smith who stole the show. Armed only with his guitar and a 40 year backlog of songs to choose from, he belted out a solid set, stopping only to encourage the crowd and thank those who had come down to support the night. Before the gig I had a



Photo: Martin Mathers

quick chat with TV and asked if he'd be playing 'Thin Green Line' as I'd watched a recording of it that day at a little performance he'd done in Sound it Out a few years ago. He said it wasn't on the agenda, but f**k me, if he didn't manage to slip it in there for me half way through the set list. That, coupled with a few Advert classics (No Time to be 21 / Bored Teenagers / Gary Gilmore's Eyes) got a few fists pumping and feet tapping along. A true star and a gentleman.

After the gig I shared a pint with my new mates and helped carry a few carrier bags of food and tins, which had been donated by gig-goers to the Middlesbrough Food Bank. Ten out of ten to Stephen for putting this concert on. Top marks for all the acts who took part. And good stuff to all those who came down to show their support.

S.B.

POINT BLANK TEESSIDE TEAM:

*Steve Blank
Barlow
Alex Carlin
Werionika Dudka
James Gray
John Robb*

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