

Phil King - Interview Part 2

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PB: Apple Boutique lasted for one 12 inch, 'Love Resistance', which came out in 1988 on Creation Records. Why did you decide to release it on Creation?

PK: Various reasons - I knew Alan McGee and Dick Green at Creation because Felt were signed to the label (this was just before I started playing with their group Biff Bang Pow!), and they were the coolest record label around at the time and put out the best records. I just took in a demo I had recorded at home and played it to them on the office answer phone, and they both liked it and agreed to book me a weekend at Alaska Studios in Waterloo (where the Jesus And Mary Chain had recorded their debut single 'Upside Down') to record it.

John Mohan from the Servants (and later Felt) played guitar on it, and producer Neil Scott (who played guitar with Everything But The Girl, Felt and Denim and whose lodger I was at the time in Fulham) found the drummer Owen Seymour. We also used Emily Brown from the Hangman's Beautiful Daughters on backing vocals. It turned out amazingly well. There's a lightness of touch to the recording that was almost impossible to replicate live. We recorded it in the summer of 1987, and it ended up coming out in 1988 as there was no real hurry to release it as

it wasn't as if anyone knew who we were.

PB: And why did you just one single?

PK: It didn't set the world alight sales wise as I hadn't played around with Apple Boutique before the release and built up a following. There was no buzz around the single at all. At the time Creation publicist Jeff Barrett took the single into the 'NME' and assistant editor Danny Kelly told him that no group with the letter 'A' were ever successful. Bob Stanley did end up writing a nice small piece on the group in the front section of the paper though.

Less than a year later I would end up working there myself as a picture researcher. In the meantime I had a part-time job working at Record and Tape Exchange, and even had to put a copy of the record in the bargain basement one day.

The only place that seemed to show any interest in the record was Spain. I seem to remember being contacted by an A and R man from a major Spanish label who even came round to where I lived in Kilburn to see me. I bumped into Ed Ball, who was now working at Creation around this time in Shaftesbury Avenue, and he told me that they were thinking of recording a Spanish language version of 'Love Resistance.' The instrumental B-side 'Ballad of Jet Harris' was also proving popular in clubs in Valencia as well. I recently found out that there was even a bootleg of the 12" pressed up in a generic Creation bag.

PB: The German label Vollwert recently released 'Paraphernalia', which compiled together the single and various live tracks and demos and which sold out quickly. Were you surprised by this as well, as its sister label Edition 59's follow up reissue of 'Love Resistance', which also sold out?

PK: Yes, I was very pleased and surprised by this. I think Werner at Vollwert may have a few copies of 'Paraphernalia' available for sale still actually.

PB: You are known as primarily a bass player, but you played guitar and sung lead vocals for Apple Boutique. You have got a good singing voice, so why did you only do one single and have not taken lead vocals again? Did you not want to carry on fronting a band?

PK: The catalogue number of the single was CRE52. CRE53 was 'Christine' by the House Of Love. That was of course a monster record in terms of sales. Ours wasn't. Also, once I started playing live with Apple Boutique, I decided to leave Biff Bang Pow! to concentrate on the group, so my connection to the label was even more tenuous.

We ended up playing various support slots around London, but to honest there wasn't a lot of interest. The group was something that John and I had assembled from Musicians Wanted columns so it never felt that organic and more than a little workmanlike. It never had the lightness of the record. I think the final straw was when we supported Carter USM at The Falcon and everybody was saying they were the next big thing, and I just thought "Really? Them!" and called it a day.

PB: The bands that I know you have been in are the Servants, Apple Boutique, Lush Felt, Biff! Bang! Pow! and the Jesus and Mary Chain. Are there any that I have missed out?

As I mentioned earlier, I also played with the Hangman's Beautiful Daughter around this time. Between Apple Boutique and Lush, whom I joined in 1991, I played for a short while with a group signed to Lazy, who also had the Primitives and Birdland on their label, called See See Rider. Pete Tweedie from the Primitives played drums for them. When I had joined they had just released their excellent first single 'She Sings Alone' and toured supporting Lloyd Cole. The single I recorded with them was called 'Stolen Heart.' This was produced by genius German producer Zeus P Held. He'd previously produced Gina X, Transvision Vamp and my current favourite, 'Rocket Man' by the Rocket Men. This is an insane novelty synth record from 1974. 'Stolen Heart' almost grazed the Top 50. There is an album coming out this year of the two singles and lots of unreleased recordings we did at the time.

After the Jesus And Mary Chain split in 1998, I did play some shows with art-glam terrorists Earl Brutus and played on some of their recordings. The Jesus And Mary Chain's drummer Nick Sanderson (now very sadly deceased) was Earl Brutus' singer. I did go and see them play at a NME Brats show at the Astoria around the time I was going to start playing with the Mary Chain and thought they were amazing - but was more than a little scared by Nick.

"I'm probably going to have to share a hotel room with this maniac!" I thought. I did end up sharing a room with him, but he was a lovely, very funny, very clever man. We didn't do enough shows the time I was in the group. By this point they were a pub band really. We would go to the pub and talk about being in a band. When we did play it was always extremely exciting - and dangerous. I scorched my trousers at one show at the ICA when one of the flares went off under me.

PB: Lush were pretty massive, did you do 'Top Of The Pops' and how was your TOTP moment? Did the band only end due to the suicide of their drummer, Chris Acland?

PK: We did 'Top of The Pop's twice. The first time for 'Single Girl', the second time for 'Ladykillers.' My recollection of it, like most people who play it, is of how small the room actually was. They had the wide eye lens camera up on a crane right in the corner of the room so it made the room a lot larger than it actually was. There were only about fifty people in the studio, and by the end of our song they had moved nearly all of them to the next stage in preparation for the next act, Cher. When they moved them all towards the end of her song to the next act (which was either Cast or Supergrass), the last notes rang out of her song to no audience at all, and when the song finished her shoulders slumped and she looked down rather dejected.

I've been re-watching 'Double Deckers' recently with my children recently, and it's interesting seeing the scenes that were filmed outside the studios in Borehamwood High Street as I recognised the location from when I wandered around it at lunchtime after our rehearsals for 'Top of The Pops' in the studios there that morning. The second time we were on it was all a bit of a blur because we had to rush off at the end to play a show in Bournemouth. I just remember there not being any shots of me as my nieces Katy and Lizzie watched it on TV and were saying "Where's Uncle Philip?"

Irrespective of Chris' sad death, the group would have split up as Emma (Andersen, vocals and guitar-Ed) had had enough of the constant touring. We did three major US tours in the space a few months - and the management even talked about sending us back for another one. There is footage on YouTube of us doing a TV show in San Francisco, just before we went to Hawaii and then played what we didn't realise were going to be our last ever shows, in Japan, where we just look exhausted.

The last tour had been a disaster as we seemed to be playing support shows with the Goo Goo Dolls (not our idea) at similar sized venues to one we had headlined only months before. The final straw was our New York show where we were on so early, and the security were so heavy handed that a lot of our fans didn't even get to see us. Afterwards we went to a bar and got drunk. Mark Eitzel was there and I told him our woes. When he heard that Chris had died, he wrote a song about it thinking Chris was me.

PB: Did you enjoy fronting Apple Boutique and did the 12 inch sell out? Did you enjoy being on Creation Records more or on 4AD who released Lush's records

PK: Before I became a frontman I thought when I was in the Servants and Felt that maybe I could do this. When it came to it, it was a lot harder than I realised, as I also was trying to keep the whole thing afloat. I don't know whether the single ever sold out. I don't even know how many were pressed. A few thousand maybe? There was never any contract with Creation Records for Apple Boutique. I seem to remember getting a few hundred pounds from Alan McGee or Dick Green for the record. It didn't matter as it wasn't really about the money. It was just great to have the opportunity to have a great record out on Creation.

Creation or 4AD - which did I enjoy more? I enjoyed the period I was on Creation, but I think I left at the right time. I don't think I would have enjoyed it as much during the period I was on 4AD. That was a very cool label too of course.

PB: You spent times in Felt and Biff Bang Pow! Did you appear on any of their albums? Were there any long periods of time that you were not in bands?

PK: I never actually played on a Felt album. I was the touring bass player as the bassist on the records, Marco Thomas, was playing lead guitar live. The closest I got to being on a Felt record was my silhouette on the back of 'Poem of a River'. I played on Biff Bang Pow!'s 1988 'Love Is Forever' album.

The longest I guess that I didn't play was the last few years before the Jesus and Mary Chain recently started playing again. When they reformed in 2007 I also agreed to play a show with John's Children and so I was rehearsing with the Jesus and Mary Chain during the day and John's Children in the evening.

PB: You joined the Jesus and Mary Chain shortly after they released 'Munki' in 1998, and have played with them ever since. Is the chemistry still there and do you have any plans for new material? Apart from this, you write for 'Uncut'? How did that come about? And I believe that you are a dad now, has that affected your touring commitments? And finally what are your future plans?

PK: The chemistry is very much there with the Jesus and Mary Chain. Even more so than the last time round if you ask me. Jim and William are having fun. It's great to have John Moore back (and he's using William's 'Psychocandy' pedal) and Brian Young's drumming style fits in really well, especially on the earlier 'Psychocandy' period songs. It certainly feels like a band rather a disparate bunch of musicians.

To take it back to my first answer about my first love being bubblegum, a lot of the Mary Chain songs reminded of that genre, albeit a fucked up version of it. The live sound is always on edge because it sounds like it is often about to fall apart, but that's what makes it exciting. It's certainly never boring with the Jesus and Mary Chain.

There is talk of recording new material. I don't really have any further detail on that really. There is certainly a stockpile of great songs by Jim and William.

My day job at 'Uncut' is picture researching. I do write occasionally but I wouldn't really say it is my profession, more of a hobby.

My son Joe who is five (I also have a daughter Grace who is three) is very excited by all the travelling I am doing at the moment. When he heard that I was going to China where he knows pandas are from, he was very impressed as "it is a very long way away." We've bought him a map and I make sure to send him a postcard from every location I play.

As for my future plans - hopefully lots of touring with the Jesus and Mary Chain. On the writing front, a book called 'Wired Up! Glam, Proto-Punk & Bubblegum European Picture Sleeves 1970-76' is coming out in a few weeks and I contributed sleeves, ads and interviews with various members of Junkshop Glam acts for it.

Also there is a series of book coming out online called 'The First Time I Heard' put together by writer Scott Heim (director Gregg Araki filmed his book 'Mysterious Skin'), for which I wrote my reminiscences on the first time I heard David Bowie and New Order.

PB: Thank you.



