

## PART ONE. APPLES AND TREES

### HERE COME THE CHITTY MEN

Its not that Thomas Is a naughty boy...at two years old I'm not sure he knows what being naughty is.

He's just nosey. Despite my constantly telling him not to use the arm of the settee as a step up onto the window sill, he wont stop doing it. He gets a good view of what 's occurring on the close that we live on and something had his attention. I took a look for myself and saw the bin lorry coming up the hill.

“are the dustmen coming ?” I asked. He looked at me with that smile that melts me every time and said “yes”.

This triggered a memory in my head . I think id had a similar chat at that age with my mum. But she hadn't said dust or bin..... what was it.....?.....????

That's it.... “Chitty” I said out loud. He turned and looked at me. “Look Thomas , here come the chitty men” Thomas laughed at me. For a moment I was there... back in 1971 looking out of the window . Such a vivid memory of my own childhood. Wow. Will Thomas recall this moment in 36 years time and pass on the word chitty? I doubt it. A memory. A moment in time.

Perhaps that's all I have left. A mind full of memories about past glories and failings, Secrets and lies, death

and destruction,  
joy and despair, pain and suffering... not forgetting  
the most important... memories of love and hate.

I suppose that everything we go through in life helps  
shape our  
personalities for the future. With each day bringing  
new challenges for us, it means we are constantly  
evolving as people.

So what challenges and events have made me evolve  
into this tedious, ill tempered , bitter and tired  
person that I am?

I guess it started in South Wales about 30 years  
ago.....

The welsh accent is a bizarre one. Its quite a unique  
sound. A sound that would go on to be the height  
of fashion in years to come thanks to The  
Alarm, The manic Street preachers, Goldie Looking  
Chain , The stereophonics and TV home wrecker  
Cerys Mathews. But in 1977 Max Boyce was the doll  
of the valley. But that is by the by. We were in  
Wales as part of our summer holiday. A tour of  
relatives who lived in places other than our own  
town of Burton upon Trent... A cost effective way of  
feeling like you had been away somewhere exotic. A  
cosy council house in Penhow with a roaring real fire  
was the home of my mothers older brother Jack and  
his family. That was his wife Frances and his three  
teenage children John, Sandra and Lynne. Jack had  
been telling us ghost stories. The best one was about  
hot fish and chips on a dark country road. It was early

evening, about 7pm ish. With it being August and light the creepiness of the tale kind of past me by. Uncle Jack's next idea was to have a go on his new games console. Now this is 1977. You can imagine the massive box involved . At that time it was ground breaking stuff. It was to be a game of....Squash.

No aliens or guns..... Just squash. The ball wasn't even round. He put the TV on to set up his pride and joy. "hey , just in time for a news flash!" Was it Kenneth Kendall or Kenneth Baker? Probably neither. Whoever it was announced That Elvis Presley was dead. Fresh real news. No mention of cheeseburgers or toilets in 1977. Just the fact he was dead. The room was in shock. I knew this was big but I didn't realise just how big. In fact this would prove to be a life a changing moment for me.

What I needed to know then as an eight year old boy from Burton on Trent on Holiday in South Wales at my uncle Jack's was simple.. who was Elvis Presley and why didn't Jack have a job.

My dad had a job. My dad always had a Job.....But we didn't have a games console....

.....how bizarre. Little did I know at the time but I would learn in years to come that people without jobs have more and are

happier than people who do have jobs.

And what's with the fire? Its August.

SEX PISTOLS WILL PLAY

It turns out that Elvis was the king of rock and roll.

Now he was dead. So dead that people wept openly in the street...wow...what a thing to happen.

Not just close friends and family, but people who he never met. The whole world in shock and clearly overcome with

Grief. Even Jesus didn't get that. How many people have that impact the day they die?

Not many.

Maybe after all those years of not coming to Britain Elvis may have done a spiritual whistle stop Tour. I say this because that same day my uncle Jack gave me my first guitar. A stroke of genius Still as yet unmatched. Sadly for Lynne it was hers and she found this generous gesture of her Father most upsetting. Not to worry....I would put it to good use.

The guitar my uncle Jack gave me was a medium sized nylon stringed acoustic.

It was well cared for and in perfect tune. I was so proud of it and I would love it forever.

Upon our return to Burton I would learn to play it and change the world. The holiday ended and we went home.

Upon our return to Burton I got a circle compass from my sisters school pencil case and using the point dug a hole through the wood just beneath the existing and purposely designed hole. This was great fun and I really enjoyed doing it.

The moment I actually broke through and could

shove the compass all the way In was like striking gold in a mine. But this wasn't enough. I had to do more damage so the carnage continued.

Using a ball point pen I then gouged massive score lines all over the guitar and stamped on it breaking all the strings. The guitar then went to the back of my wardrobe for safe keeping.

Little did I know then that 15 years later I would get paid twenty pounds and three pints of lager to do something similar in front of 100 people .

A memory . A story. A moment in time. Captured forever in my head.

Now although only 8, I was well aware of what was going on in the world. This was largely due to my fathers obsession with the news. Elvis wasn't the only thing making musical headlines. The punk revolution was in full swing and it grabbed my full attention. The most exciting and appealing of these bands, Sex Pistols, set my pulse racing. Sex pistols. The greatest band in the history of music.

## SEASONS GREETINGS

As the grown ups partied in the lounge at my Uncle Rick and Auntie Lindys house during the 1977 yuletide season I crept into big cousin Andrews room with his younger brother, Christopher and played god save the queen, anarchy in the uk and pretty vacant. I couldn't even speak.

With news items on TV and tabloid headlines ,plus this great sound , I new these boys were

changing the world. If only I had a guitar....I would change the world aswell..

Oh yeah.....I had been given one earlier that year and I destroyed it for no good reason. Oh well.....that's rock and roll.

I went back downstairs and watched in horror as the crowded houseful of drunk adults danced ,Laughed , smoked, ate, threw up,argued,kissed and shouted as their children(of which I was one )wandered around aimlessly yawning and waiting for the respective sets of parents to leave and take them home. I sat on the floor out of the way by the side of the table in the kitchen.I couldn't stop thinking about the songs I had heard.

"I'm gonna get pissed...destroy."

"I'm gonna get pissed...destroy"

Wow.....what a lyric. What a voice.

As I sat thinking my little thoughts I found my eyes wandering in a daydream not fully taking in what or who I was seeing,until that is I heard a glass 'chink' to my side.I glanced down.

There it was. Staring straight at me.A bottle.A bottle that a grown up had just put down as they nipped To the toilet.Not just any bottle....a pretty full one.

"I'm gonna get pissed....."

It was like a gift and It didn't need offering twice. I grabbed that bottle and ran up to Andrews Room and put Anarchy in the U.K on again.Holsten Pils was the brand and the Sex Pistols where my Soundtrack. I drank the beer and felt fantastic.

My parents were always late leavers at these things so time was on my side. The rest of tonight would be a drink stealing bonanza and at eight years old I would be drunk for the first time. (Amazingly, big cousin Andrew would give me these records in 1981. Thanks. I still have them now.) My parents didn't even notice. They were tipsy anyway. I felt a tad ill the next day...but I've learned over the years that that is part of the deal. 1977...I discovered 3 things that would stay with me forever. Guitars, The Sex Pistols and alcohol.

## GOODBYE LORRIES AND DIRT

As 1977 became 1978 I discovered something else...we as a family were leaving Burton on Trent. We were going to live in Torquay. "Turkey.....that's in the desert!" said Spencer Lloyd, one of my school friends. "a thousand miles into the desert across the sea."

I explained it was Torquay in Devon and was two hundred and thirty miles away.

We would keep in touch and be friends forever.....

Devon is the greatest place I have ever been and moving to it as we did is where my life truly began. My parents had purchased a guest house on Bampfylde road in Torquay. Without doubt moving from Burton was a big event and a big challenge for us all. Not just because of the obvious upheaval involved, but because of the house itself. CORTINA 13 Bampfylde Road turned

out to be one of the most haunted houses in the world.....

But what about the town we were leaving ? What about Burton upon Trent?

We will get to that later,. Much later. You need to hear this ghost story first.

### GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

“cortina” 13 Bampfylde Road was a massive terraced house that my parents purchased in 1978.

It was one of about 20 houses in a row at the top of the road. It was in those days an area full of family run guest houses and hotels. Despite till that point being a private house my parents planned to turn it into a guest house. And they did. From the moment I entered the house it terrified me. The previous owner was an old lady who had passed away some months prior to our purchase. She had died in the house. What struck me first was the musty old smell and the darkness. Then the stupidly high ceilings hit me. For an eight year old boy it was a daunting experience. I wasn't happy..

I was even unhappier when due to some antique wiring we lost power as the sun set. In view of this setback our first night was spent all together on mattresses on the lounge floor with 2 candles to light the room. Our family was myself, my sister Ann who was five years my senior and our parents.

As we lay in the musty dark room trying to sleep I



felt something I had never been aware of before...

...my heart beat. It was pounding faster and stronger than ever before. My brow and back were moist with sweat as the tension took a hold of me. I didn't even know why.

I didn't sleep that night.

The next day the hard work really began. With the holiday season looming my parents needed to get stuck in and transform the Norman Bates house interior to an acceptable letting standard, and turn the basement into a flat we could occupy during the summer months. Not forgetting the part about my dad also having a full time job.

For our part, Ann and myself were asked to choose ourselves an out of season bedroom.

There was five to choose from spread out over three floors.

Ground Floor... Bedroom five was at ground level next to the lounge. My parents chose this one .

First Floor... A toilet on a small landing with 2 small staircases on it. One going up to floor two.

Second Floor... Bedroom one. A single box room next to a bathroom. Rear of house view.

Third Floor... Bedroom two. A double bedroom.

Bedroom three. A massive family room. This had a front of house view overlooking Bampfylde Road. Next to this was bedroom four. A twin bedroom. (twin is 1970's speak for 2 single beds).

Ann chose one and I chose four.

To my surprise the first few weeks of sleeping in bedroom four passed without major incident. I had started at a new school, made some new friends and was enjoying my new seaside life.

People who never lived in the 1970's are so unlucky. It was the last great decade this country ever had.

Jesus.....I think I was happy...wow.

Even the view of the street below was great. As my parents turned the dark musty horror house into a light fresh fun family home I thought I had misjudged the place. I even had a sink in my room...my own sink in my bedroom. Fantastic. Little did I

know that in 15 or so years time I would have a bedroom that

not only had a sink in it, but a cooker, a fridge, a TV and everything I owned in the world, crammed in it and would not find it so "fantastic".

And then it began.....

Have you ever been lying on a bed and maybe your mum or dad or brother or sister have sat down on the edge of the bed? Maybe to kiss you goodnight or to chat? If yes then you will know how the mattress depresses downward and your body kind of rolls toward them?

Well that's what happened. Smack bang in the middle of the night and in total darkness I was awoken by someone sitting on the edge of my bed. I turned round and opened my eyes expecting to see my sister.

.but there was no-one there.

Yet there was....the mattress was still depressed and I could feel my waist leaning against them.

The feelings I had experience that first night in the lounge came rushing back but a thousand times worse. This was true terror. I wet myself and literally passed out with fear.

When I came around it was morning time. I told my tale of terror to my family. It was received with an awkward round the breakfast table moment of silence and shifty glances.

“a dream...grow up” was my fathers eventual official response.

As my fear of going to bed took a hold in my mind, it seemed the day turned against me. Minutes lasted seconds and hours passed in minutes.. Bed time was coming fast and I couldn't stop it. I'm not James Herbert or Steven King so I cant do justice to what I went through for the next week or two, but I had a number of similar 'edge of bed ' moments. Added to this was the sound of people talking and walking around in bedroom three, the room next to mine. My tearful pleadings with my family to help me seemed to fall on deaf ears. Was I mad? When all seemed lost and I felt my death at the hands of my night time visitors was imminent I had good news from my parents.

The summer season was starting and my dad had made the basement into an area for us to live in.

Bedroom four was no more and I would have to share

with Ann at night. What's that song....."no more lonely nights..."

It would be May to October that we lived in the basement.. How strange, to be happier sleeping in a basement than in the main house. My tension faded and I began to sleep normally again.

The weather got warm and the schools broke up. The fear faded and my smile came back. Summer 1978. June to be precise.9 months after my first guitar and I got my second.

A birthday gift from my mum and dad. This was an electric one. I had an electric guitar.

Unless you love guitars you cant appreciate what a wonderful feeling it is to have an electric guitar under your bed.

Nice.

The bedroom four haunting had become an almost amusing story to recount to my friends.

"I get a similar thing" said Paul Fenlon , "I always seem to look at my digital bedside radio alarm clock at eleven past eleven. .... AM and PM!"

Mmm.....I didn't see the connection then and I don't see it now. But that's Paul Fenlon for you..

Six months can pass very quickly when you are having fun.

To quickly. With the damp and mildew problem making it necessary for us to vacate the basement and return to our winter rooms , I had an uneasy feeling creep up on me.

That pounding heart and fear of bedtime feeling.

I plumbed for number four again. This decision was based on several factors. Ann was back in number one, my parents were back in number five, there were people wandering around in bedroom three and at this point I had never even dared enter bedroom two.

To my credit I was better prepared this time. My game plan was to have a radio on so I couldn't hear the people in bedroom three, and a row of pillows down my side so I was crammed against the wall away from the edge. This was so I would not be so aware of the specter sitting by my side.

“what about the other bed?” I hear you cry. I had tried that earlier in the year. It made no odds.

The supernatural demon followed. Night one back in four was an unprecedented success. Not just due to my evasive action, but due to the nature of my listening choice. My ghost fear had made me listen to night time radio one for the first time. That's how I heard John Peel for the first time. My love of the sex pistols was the tip of the iceberg. John helped me develop my music tastes further. The ghost didn't matter. How could it compare with The clash, siouxsie and the banshees, the exploited, kraftwerk and many more.

The cure ...joy division, the list goes on . Maybe some of the names just mentioned hadn't been on his show or formed in 1978, I don't know what the hell he was playing...but it sounded great.

Music was my first love and it shall be my last.

But no! what was happening! 12 o'clock at night

came. Radio one ended. Jesus , “ John come back Please!” I cried in my head. Little did I know then that in about 27 years time I would be saying these words out load.

I was alone once more. Then the unthinkable happened. The door began to open. The ghost was coming through the door. I froze as the ghoulish fiend entered. If you have seen the ring then the dark shadow approaching me was like the scary little girl from that film. I saw its arm reach for the light.

My god . It was going to show itself to me in full light!

CLICK. It was Ann. “thought you may want some company”

She got in the other bed and we went to sleep. Ann coming to look after me at midnight became a regular thing. John Peel, Monday to Thursday 10 till 12. Tommy Vance on Friday, 10 till 12 and Ann kept the ghost away. .... For about 2 months.

Its next plan of attack was a more direct and oral manifestation.

It wasn't until Ann asked me at about 2am one Friday night why my clock sounded so loud that I heard the ticking myself.

I sat up and turned my bedside lamp on.. “ I don't have a clock” I said. At that moment it stopped.

A chill passed through us both. With in seconds of us re turning the light out the clock ticking began again. For my part I felt a sense of relief. I now had a star witness to my haunting .

My blood ran cold as Ann explained that she had never disbelieved me. Far from it.

The truth was that she had also been going through an ordeal of her own at the hands of an evil spirit in bedroom one. She had been coming to my room for her own sake. Not mine.

I was even more terrified when she said that to prove to our parents she wasn't a liar she had taped the happenings on her tape recorder. She went to her room and returned with tape and player in hand. Ann explained that what I was about to hear was an ornamental duck spinning in its saucer. The creaking of what sounded like a rope swinging from a ceiling Joyce, and a Gregorian style monk in a monastery type chanting in the background. To coin a phrase the tape did exactly what it said on the tin. For a moment I thought it was a well conceived hoax to scare me. But as a solitary tear rolled down her cheek and she whimpered in a pathetic quivering voice "this house is haunted" I knew this was real. As if by magic and bang on q, and with the light on, as if to say "you better believe its real"

The clock that didn't even exist began ticking once more.

Ann showed me how to put the radio on long wave and found a station that didn't stop. We put it on loud and turned out the light. I don't think either of us slept a wink.....for weeks.

My parents official response was an angry "stop being silly.. Ghosts are not real"

It was this over aggression to our plight I just couldn't understand.

As the spirits upped the anti and things got to intense my sister went to stay with a friend for a girls Saturday night treat. This was my first night upstairs on my own . Separated by 2 flights of stairs from my parents. No radio could drown the noise of talking and walking about from bedroom three, The clock ticking, the floor boards outside my door creaking and to cap it all the door of bedroom one opening and closing over and over again. Why couldn't my parents hear this mayhem. Why wouldn't They help me. As my mattress dipped with the ghost sitting by me I could hardly breath with fear.

Then it did it. I felt a hand brush over my hair and the faint sound of someone breathing. No not the sound of breathing...I could feel it by my ear.

“ sod this” I thought.. I jumped from my bed and ran from my room screaming like a mad man. Tears streamed down my cheeks and urine dripped into my pants. I hit the first light switch and ran down the first flight of stairs. As I turned past the toilet and on to the second flight my back was toward the door of bedroom one. It slammed twice in defiance of my daring to leave my room.

I reached the ground floor and burst into my parents room. Alarmed by this they both jumped up and calmed me down. I explained the nights events. They had a single bed in the corner of their bedroom, the



remnants of a late family of three booking toward the end of the season. They said I could sleep in it and my dad went to check bedroom one. Upon his return he explained that the window was open and the wind was picking up, the door was only ajar and had been moving with the gusts. He had closed the window and locked the door.

We settled down and began to drift off.

This was bedroom five. It was beneath bedroom two. I don't recall at this point ever having the balls nor the cause to enter bedroom two. Once again I had the inability to breath as I clearly heard someone walk across the room above us and open the sash window, this was followed by more footsteps and the distant sound of a male and female arguing. Then bedroom ones door clearly opened and slammed shut. I sat up about to shout out to my parents. But I didn't get chance . My dad was sat up with the light on in a flash. " go get em dad" I thought.

But he didn't. He looked me in the eye, told me to go to sleep and reached across to his radio alarm clock and turned the BBC world service on... loud.

At this moment I knew It would not be mentioned again, and that I would not be allowed to mention It either.

As for Ann's tape? Years later Ann did research and discovered that a young man had hung himself in that room.

Shocking.

We lived in that house and ran it as guest house in

the summer for 5 more years.

The happenings never stopped . The tension never stopped.

When my parents announced the sale of the house on Bampfylde road I felt a great sense of relief.

This was short lived as they then announced the house they were buying was “Templeton” on Bridge Road. It was an even older and scarier building just round the corner.

It was to be a private home where we would enjoy the fruits of my parents hard work.

Once again the challenge of transforming an old musty house into a warm family home faced them and It would be a busy time for all. Upon entering Templeton I felt like new person. Despite the age, the dark , and the smell, this house did not have the same intensity as Cortina.

Not living in grossly haunted house was going to take some getting used to. Living with fear can take its toll

Its only now I realize how traumatized I was.

The real sickening thing was the view from my new bedroom window. It overlooked the rear of the

Terraced row of houses on Bampfylde Road . As god is my witness almost smack bang opposite my new window was the

window of bedroom two. No more than 60 yards separated my new room from the abortion of terror that was bedroom two.

As I gazed across I could see the dark shadowy figures of two people moving around the room.

I went and told my mother I had seen movement and that the new owners must be moving in.

“ you must be mistaken , son” she said. “tomorrow is the completion date. We moved here today because we know the previous owner quite well”

But I wasn't mistaken. I had seen the ghosts of bedroom two.

The story you have just read is the truth as I remember it. It was my first but by no means my last brush with the supernatural.

It also brings us neatly and swiftly to 1983.

#### THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING

By 1983 we had been under the rule of Margaret Thatcher and her evil government for a number of years. To her credit She did well taking us to war with Argentina . We won and many people died, but apart from that I don't think she was overly popular.

Going to war doesn't always get you popular support. Especially if its done on the strength of a lie.

Little did I know that in 20 years time an evil man claiming to be a Christian would be the leader of a Labour government that would take us into such war and with his American puppet master bring the planet to the very brink of destruction.

But that is by the by. I wasn't eight anymore . I was thirteen and had things to do. Top of my list was

Forming a band. I had begun to build a rather educated record collection and my sense of music was getting a fine tuning and I knew where I wanted to go artistically. Sadly I could count on one hand the amount of times I had even touched, let alone tried to play my electric guitar..

But hey... doesn't that add to the sheer rock n roll of it all. I just knew that when the time was right I would be a natural genius.

What I did concentrate on was my research into the effects of alcohol . Its an ongoing project that I am still actively involved in to this day. What I have discovered so far is this.

Getting drunk is like going on a journey. A journey that although familiar is always slightly different and the destination is well known but not quite the same when you get there.

God I love it. I love the taste . I love the smell. I love the person I become. Comedy is not my strong point , but give me 5 pints of strong lager and I will make you laugh. I don't like fighting but give me a bottle of whiskey and I will kick your teeth in. I haven't studied sociology , politics or humanities related topics but give me 2 bottles of red wine and I will clearly explain to you in detail what a mess This planet is in and the shortcomings of governments that engineer wars and famines to line there own

pockets and keep us all in line like good little puppies. I've never been to Ireland but give me enough Guinness and I will toast saint Patrick's health, kiss the blarney stone and listen to U2 and Thin lizzy all night long. Do you get what I'm saying ? There is a drink for every occasion and every occasion has a drink. The reasons and excuses you can think of to get drunk are endless.....

"I worked hard today..."

"Its the weekend..."

"Its someone's birthday..."

"Someone's dead..."

Blah blah blah.....

I've used them and heard them all. It doesn't end and you never want it to. What a shame it does so much damage inside. For gods sake , I've just sank 5 pints of Holsten pils just to write this page...

The times I've had. Some of the best times of my life have been on booze.

Watching a lad do a poo in a multi story car park.  
Throwing

bins into the harbor at 1 am. Being sick after kissing a girl at 2 am. Getting knocked out on Abbey Road in Torquay at 9 pm! Urinating up the same tree on 8 separate nights out in Handsworth wood in Birmingham . Throwing a full pint through the window of the fleet walk post office the night tortured soul Kurt Cobaian took the easy way out.

Going shopping at asda. Driving home from work. Going to work. Getting up. Going to sleep. Cooking

Dinner, having a bath

Voting. Watching TV. Sleeping. Eating. Watching someone fall onto a bonfire. Starting a fire . Putting out a fire, eating kebabs. It is an endless list of wonderful fun that I will treasure for all eternity. Christmas day. Boxing day. Every day. Drink .Drink . Drink.

Burying the brother in law. Having a wee. Painting the lounge. Buying a house. Sunbathing. Playing cricket. Listening to John Peel. John Peel dying. Drink . Drink . Drink.

Sing the songs that remind you of the good times.

Sing the songs that remind you of the best times.

I get knocked out.....but I get up again.

The wheels on the bus go round and round all day long.

But hey...enough of that...what about the music?

The music. My music. My talent. The time was now.

With the lyrical and vocal input from my good friend Andrew I was now in a band. Primarily called Latex Hymen we had our first rehearsal in his bedroom in December 1983. I was to play guitar for him to sing to.

I set up my amp and guitar and he plugged his mic into the amp also. I confess that as he shuffled his Lyric sheets around to pick the song he wanted to do first I was feeling nervous. I had barley touched this guitar and had no real idea what I was meant to do. What if I couldn't play? What if I had no talent?

“Ok....you start playing a tune and I will join in once

I get a feel for it. This will be called I Hate Spain Because Spain Does Bullfighting.....Ok....hit it.....” I looked at Andrew blankly. Jesus... I had talked the talk. Now I had to walk the walk. I put my fingers on the fret board and struck the strings with the plectrum.....

My god it was all true.....Without ever practising or trying I could play the guitar. Jesus Christ I could Really do it. I had been born with a natural gift for playing guitar. I closed my eyes and let myself go.

It was loud choppy and catchy.

“excellent” shouted Andrew. Lyrics in hand he then proceeded to launch a vicious attack on the cruel Spanish pastime of bullfighting. At that moment I knew I was going to be a famous and celebrated musician.

Other songs followed. They included such classics as Ice Cream In The Rain. Kill The Queen and Le Rage! (French for The Anger and also was the new name for our band)“we need a drummer” said Andrew at our next rehearsal. The snag was that we didn’t know anyone with drums. Andrews solution was that we provide the drum kit and then just employ a person we want to do play them.

“and where do we get a drum kit from?” I asked him.

He grinned a grin and put his hand on my shoulder.

“I’ve got one lined up already...let me explain.”

And that's what he did. He explained how we would jam a piece of cardboard into the locking mechanism of a glass door that led into our school hall. This meant it would look shut but not be,

If you see what I mean. This would be done on Friday afternoon. We would return that night and climb over the school wall into the internal area and simply push this glass door open and walk in. we would then get a set of ladders that we had taken from the care takers room and hidden under the stage and use them to climb into the orchestra area, which in this hall was on a balcony type thing toward the rear of the hall. We would then take the school drum kit a piece at a time down the ladder, out the hall, over the wall and into the nearby piece of woodland.

Once we

had done this we would return the ladders and remove the piece of cardboard and properly close the glass door behind us. We could then with the aid of large bin liners spend the remainder of the night ferrying the drum kit to my house.

Now I'm no criminal genius and don't know a good crime plan from a bad one, but it sounded so easy.

I agreed to the scheme. We were going to do a burglary. "when?" I enquired.

"this coming Friday" he replied.

Vintage Andrew Planning. It went like clockwork.



The burglary was a great success. I admit that during it my heart was pounding and I was shaking with fear. I am ashamed to admit that it was very exciting. I don't agree with or endorse crime in anyway but...(and there is always a but) I did enjoy it. Mainly as we were getting something we needed more than the school did. It wasn't mindless and we didn't break anything or hurt anyone. The problem came the next day when under close inspection we found that every piece of the drum kit had our school name clearly written all over it in permanent pen. This was made even worse when my mother came and told us that our school had just been mentioned on local radio. A prefabricated temporary classroom had been the target of a mindless arson attack during the night. Police were appealing for witnesses. "oh dear that's awful!" I said as I sprawled my body and arms over as much of the drum kit as I could. "who's are those drums?" she enquired "mine" choked Andrew.

Yes it was true. As we carried out our harmless and clever piece of skulduggery some brainless moron had set fire to part of the school, and there we were

sat with undeniable evidence placing us clearly at the scene of this terrible crime. My oh my what a to do.

We needed to get rid of the drums as soon as possible. We acted promptly. As soon as my parents went shopping we got some hammers from my dads workshop and spent the next couple of hours completely destroying a perfectly good drum kit. We put The pieces into the bin liners and buried them in a deep hole at the end of my parents garden. What a waste. Now I don't know why but once our task was complete both Andrew and myself laughed uncontrollably for quite some time. The fire and the missing drums became a major issue at school but We held our nerve and never spoke of it again.

As for Le Rage, well Andrew felt that the next 18 months leading up to exams and such things meant

That rock n roll should go on the back burner for a bit.

That was fair enough for Andrew. As a normal person he would need to work hard to ensure himself a career when older.

This really didn't affect me due to the life that my musical genius would give me so I didn't have to do any work at school as I wouldn't ever need to get a job with long term prospects and opportunity .

So I put my guitar under my bed and spent the next couple of years watching television, listening to the radio, pretending to be a violent bunny rabbit Raymond Barley and a knife wielding murderer called flog.(the characters flog and Raymond Barley were x-rated improvisational comedy routines excellently acted out with Paul 11 past 11 Fenlon.) Out of these activities I guess television was the main one. I love television.

## DRUG OF A NATION

I am a better person due to excessive television usage. It is educational, entertaining, enlightening, enriching, moving and stimulating. I love all types of television. Documentaries, news, soaps, Crime dramas, horror, thrillers, quiz shows, comedy shows, sports shows, chat shows.....its an endless list.

As with all of the things I hold dear to my heart I have my personal favourites that I break down into sub categories. Lets take murder mystery crime dramas as an example.

Under this genre would come shows such as Starsky and Hutch , Poirot , Marple , Ironside , The bill , Midsommer Murders , Wexford , Cagney and Lacy , Prime Suspect .....you get the general idea Yeah? Good. Well of this type of program my favourite is by far and away Columbo.

Peter Falk is a genius. I know he has been in hundreds of other things and is a versatile actor and a great Artist but he is always going to be columbo. If you are flicking through the channels on a Sunday afternoon and an episode like Double Shock comes on guest starring Martin Landau as the twin brothers who kill their uncle and frame his young fiancée, then you always watch it. No matter how many times you have seen it before. Well I do anyway. In the sports category I guess boxing is my favourite. Man against man in its ultimate format.

One on one with fists. Of this sport I have key people who's fights I will always watch. Ali, Leonard, Hearns, Hagler, Foreman, Benn, Eubank, Calzaghe, Hatton, Chico, etc.....Of these Muhammad Ali is my favourite. He works on so many levels as a human being that along with Elvis Presley and Princess Diana his death will stop the world.

Anyway I guess what I'm trying to say is that I know about great television.

In July 1985 I saw a truly great thing on television. Live Aid.

Live Aid was massive and I watched every bit of it. UK and USA gigs.

This was television at its best and it inspired me to re light my musical fire. But how? I left school a few weeks earlier and didn't really know what to do. Seeing U2 and Queen rock the world made me cry. I wanted it bad but it wasn't going to happen watching Columbo get his man and Tony Sibson getting his face banged up.

I love you television but I need to expand my horizons.

Andrew and Paul had found other things to occupy their time and were growing up fast. The summer holidays were coming to an end. Andrew was to go to Grammar school to do his A levels and Paul was going to Technical College to do a course. Apart from watching the box what was I going to do?

I had not an O level to my name and was out of ideas. I was inspired by Live Aid but didn't have the mental agility to know what to do. I was also under pressure to fill my time constructively by my parents. My television life was annoying them. "You are not living off my back!" Boomed my father.

Jesus. Had I got it wrong? Should I have worked at school.?

The answer was NO. I had played the hand perfectly and steered myself into a hopeless corner that would change everything forever. The one option that spending the majority of 1969 to 1985 watching

Television had left me was a destiny to rival Luke Skywalker's .

## YOUTH TRAINING SCHEME

Not just any Y T S, but one in retail. This meant I was to do a 35 hour week in a shop with one day at day release for £27.30 a week. Shocking.

But it was thanks to this terrible and sudden ending up in the gutter that an amazing thing was going to happen to me. I would meet the single most important person both personally and artistically that I would ever meet.

## N J B

Being stupid I had gone to the work placement on the Monday. It wasn't until the Tuesday at the day release that my mistake became apparent . Everyone knew each other. It was a 3 day induction before Going to our respective shops. The group was about 15 or so and the normal procedure was to be us all getting together each Wednesday to do our course work and projects.

This first week of the Y T S was Monday to Wednesday as a group then Thursday to Saturday at the shops.

I thought it was Monday at the shop and then Tuesday and Wednesday with the group then back to our Shops. We were split around a varied selection of Torquay shops. I was in a household hardware store.

Some were in electric shops, record shops, shoe shops etc.

At this time the Y T S retail scheme didn't have its own day centre so it was a function room in a hotel about 5 minutes from my house. I felt awkward I had missed a days bonding with my fellow Y T S Group. They put me at ease and all seemed well. At least 3 of the people I sat with all said I would Like and get on with a chap who hadn't yet arrived. I was only 16 at this time and was searching for something new and exiting in my life.

"Here he is" exclaimed some kid at the back. The door of the hotel burst open and there he was.

Now I must stress at this point that I am not and never have been or ever will be a homosexual, so don't misinterpret the point I am trying to make. What happened was basically this.....When I saw Neil for the first time this is what I thought in my head.

' This is the person I want to be in a band with. This is the person I want to be friends with. This is the Person I want to spend time with. This is the way forward. This is the future. This is music. This is it'

The dressed in black denim youth with long black curly hair almost instinctively came and sat by me.

"hi, man how's it going?" he asked.

I am an impulsive person and once the adrenalin kicks in it just pours out and it did at this point also.

The first thing I did was to pretty much tell Neil everything I had just thought moments earlier.

“that’s great, man . Lets do it.”

Jesus Christ. I had just made the biggest fool of myself ever and wanted to die and that was his response.

Destiny. He knew it and I knew it.

I hadn’t made a fool of myself at all. Id saved us a lot of time.

The course was rubbish and lunch couldn’t come soon enough. As it was so close we went to my house for something to eat. “hello love, who’s this then.” asked my mum.

Id known this guy 3 hours and told my mum straight. “this is my best friend Neil.” 6 words I hope I can say are still true to this day, 23 years later.

This by no means undermines friendships such as my 30 year friendship with Andrew, but I grew up mentally and became a man during those early years with Neil as my main source of company .I guess If I weigh it up I am very lucky to have 2 best friends such as Neil and Andrew. Both very different characters that between them satisfy all my social needs. Hey, even better.. 3 best friends if I include my wife. But this bit isn’t about Andrew or my Wife. Its about Neil.

2 years my senior he had a maturity and calmness that I was sadly lacking. Anyway , lunch that first day was beans on toast.

Neil agreed that he couldn’t compete with my amazing guitar skills and decided he would play the bass.



We would meet up and go for a drink that night and discuss it over a pint or 6.

“What? In a pub ?” I quizzed.

Neil frowned as I explained that I had done most of my drinking in graveyards and car parks and had spent the majority of that summer in a caravan getting horribly stoned on drugs I didn't even like smoking, with a group of friends I was kind of loosing touch with. Id never bought a drink in a pub and was only 16. “Don't worry I will go to the bar.” He assured me.

The day dragged and I don't think we heard a word the coordinator at the hotel said. We just talked about our band. We both liked the Jesus and Mary chain, the sisters of mercy, joy division and U2.

What a great sound it would be to merge such musical sounds in an epic wall of noise.

The day ended and we arranged to meet up at the Nat West bank at 8pm. Jesus. Going to a pub with the bass player in my new band. Amazing. What a day this had been. I even had a bath after my tea.

It was very strange but also deeply satisfying to inform my 6.30pm phone callers that I would not be Meeting them at Annabelle's caravan that evening. I had something better to do. I think that it was clear I wouldn't be going there again. I don't think that they were entirely surprised either.

## THE FALCON

On Abbey road in Torquay there is an Odeon

cinema. Next to that cinema is a pub called The Falcon.

This was our destination for our chat and drink. We met at the bank as planned and made our way to the Pub. Inside it was like a good old fashioned pub, complete with dart board and dry roasted peanuts. We walked through to the rear bar and Neil went for drinks as I went to sit down. It wasn't busy so I could choose any table. I chose one at the far end of the room in the left hand corner. Little did I know as I sat at this table for the first time that for many years to come this is where I would spend most of my evenings. As there was 2 of us I was alarmed to see Neil approach the table with a tray full of drinks. He sat down and shared the drinks out between us.

A pint of kronenbourg 1664 each plus 3 bottles of the same lager each as well.

“ Jesus Neil you must be a really heavy drinking pub monster from hell!” I exclaimed.

“ Not really, man ..I just found that very stressful so I thought I would save myself the bother of going again by getting them now. I haven't been to a pub before either...Cheers!!”

We laughed heartily and guzzled our drinks.

It was great. It was like we had known each other for years.

Getting drunk and laughing in a pub like a grown up. I spared a thought for my other friends who would at this point be sat in a marijuana filled caravan listening to Pink Floyd. This was more up my ally.

That night we hatched a plot to take Torquay by the horns and bring it to its knees with our tour de force sound wave. Our first jam would be on Saturday in his parents garage. But this was Tuesday and that meant we had 3 more nights talking and drinking in the falcon to do, and that's what we did.

I learned a lot about Neil that first week. My first impressions that Tuesday in the hotel turned out to be spot on.

Here was a man with a desire to be told the truth and to speak the truth. Here was a man who still believed that manners make the man. Here was a man who respected the individuals rights to be who they want to be. Here was an intelligent man who hadn't

achieved his full potential prior to ending up on a Y T S he was 2 years too old to be on because he knew he didn't need to.

He didn't need to because he knew he was a gifted person destined for a greater existence. Upon meeting me he realised that the gift was in 2 parts .

Neil's first gift was to be the greatest bass player in the world in one of the most ground breaking music acts in history.

His second gift was his art.

I felt that Neil had a deeper side to his ability to express himself so I suggested that he began taking photographs and doing drawings. Not only would this give him a stunning portfolio but would give us unique designs and images for gig posters and record

covers.

He took this advice on board and took to it with stunning ease.

At this point we had no idea I would become the singer. Neil was keen to meet Andrew after I told him of my prior incarnation 2 years earlier with Le Rage.

We decided if Saturday went well we would get a few tunes together and give Andrew an audition.

As for drums...no robbery needed this time. We would buy a second hand kit from a dodgy shop on Market Street and hold

auditions for that also. This all depended on how well our first Jam went. Id never played along with another instrument before.

In fact I wasn't even sure where my guitar was at this point.

The last time I saw it Id just buried a drum kit.

## THE JAM

My dad took me to Neil's house that Saturday morning and we set up our gear. Neil had got a bass off some kid he knew.

"lets go!"

Destiny.

We played liquid music of such a high standard that we both felt breathless. We both could not and still cannot understand how we knew what each other was about to play and to move our fingers accordingly. We didn't even watch each other. We just did it.

2 hours later we felt a pint coming on. Playing full

blown rock n roll is thirsty business.

Thirsty business but not hard work. Writing music was very easy for people like me and Neil.

Little did we know at the time but the ease with which we created music and art would ultimately work against us.

The music we made cemented our friendship.

Good times lay ahead. Our immediate task was to buy bigger and louder equipment and get a rehearsal room booked for our forthcoming auditions.

This took several months to achieve, during which time we spent a lot of time discussing our plan while drinking in the falcon.

The clientele of the falcon was very much the middle aged bar hound type of guy, but from time to time the odd young person would pop in for a drink as they headed elsewhere.

Now I'm not the quietest person in the world and after copious amounts of lager Neil wasn't exactly a horse whisperer.

People were hearing us talk and clearly spreading the word about 2 young mavericks on the verge of artistic success.

The feel and the nature of the customers in the falcon began to change and a young movement of punks and Goths and wasters seemed to appear. Some nervous smiles and the odd hello came our way. We didn't quite understand the reason for any of this until one day a young chap and his girlfriend sat at the next table and waved to us. " hey, are you those guys in

that band?”

Jesus. They were our fans. We didn't have a name. We hadn't played a gig. We weren't sure of our final line up and we hadn't knowingly talked of it to anyone, and yet here we were sat in a busy pub full of our very own ready to entertain fan base.

Like I said. It was all so easy. By not doing anything other than

Getting drunk and talking to each other Neil and myself found ourselves Torquay's hottest band.

We needed to hold the auditions soon.

## ARMY OF TWO

An old archive storage area beneath some council offices were the best rehearsal rooms in Torquay. For £20 you got four hours and you could be as loud as you like. We had all the gear set up and were awaiting our fellow prospective band members to arrive. It was around 8 pm on a Friday night and first up was my old pal Paul. Paul was a natural drummer with a very good musical knowledge. Despite clear musical differences we thought we would give him a go.

We explained that we wanted him to kick up a beat on the drums and we would then join in and jam along.

Paul began pounding out a beat and it sounded rather good.

Neil by this point had bought himself a black jazz fender bass and it had the most evil sound. He

plucked the big thick string on the top in time to the drums and just I followed. It sounded awesome. Then a strange thing happened. Paul simply stopped. “Look guys, I don’t mean to be funny but your ears don’t feel pain, that noise will be doing untold damage to our ears and we wont realise until we are older. Could you turn your guitars down please?”

Neil looked at me and shook his head as he motioned ‘cut’ with his hand across his own neck.

I showed Paul the way out and told him we would be in touch.

Next up was one of Neil’s mates Mark.

He clearly wasn’t very good and didn’t seem to be taking it very seriously at all. Mind you he didn’t complain about the noise.

It seemed to be going ok until Neil became aware that the force with which he was striking the drums was not for the sake of

Loud music and passion, it was to see if he could break them.

“hit it harder Mark, you may get your hole fist through if you really try.” quipped Neil sarcastically through the mic.

“ok” smiled Mark. “watch this”

Mark then quite clearly and deliberately put his fist through one of the drums.

As Neil showed Mark the way out he did in all fairness apologise and explained that the music had been so gripping he couldn’t help himself. As 9.30pm

approached we found ourselves alone and still awaiting the person who should have been there at 7pm.

Andrew.

As if by magic he appeared but was acting rather strange. We told him of the Mark and Paul events.

As with those years before in his bedroom we would play a tune and he could join in with one of his songs. So we played and he stood at the mic stand ready to sing.

We played. He stood. He stood some more and we kept playing.

After 10 minutes of this we stopped.

“Are you ok?” I asked.

He then produced a pair of dark glasses and put them on. “no ..

Where’s the toilet?”

I escorted him to the lavvy where he explained he was coming up on some rather strong magic mushrooms and couldn’t cope with the situation.

As I showed him out he turned and told us in a rather shaky voice. “er... the drum thing type ....er issue...

I know this ..er this kid....I know....I will get you a thing...you know....a drum thing.....does it for you...plug it in. I can get you a drum machine.”

And that was it. That was our audition night.

Neil picked up the mic stand and plonked it in front of me.

“for the reverend Martin Luther King.....Sing”

We launched into a drum less jam to rival moments



from that record by the velvet underground and I began to wail angrily

about the poor effort from our auditioned failures.

I was taken with the moment and notch by notch we got louder and louder until our very souls were screaming in pain.

We ground to a halt and collapsed in near exhaustion.

“ You can sing and we will see how we get on with this drum machine your mates going to get us. We don't need anyone else. We are the band.”

He was right. It was just the two of us. The only two people we could rely on was clearly ourselves.

## COMING UP ROSES

True to his word about 6 months later Andrew came up trumps with the drum machine.

For our part Neil and I had spent a lot of time getting to know some of the people who now seemed part of our lives.

1986 was now gone and 1987 was upon us.

We had written a number of songs and were ready for our live debut. The new group of friends we had made were getting very impatient as well. They had heard all the talk and needed us back it up.

One of our new found comrades was a radical left wing activist called Stewart. He was organising an aids benefit night in the function room of the bull and bush. We were going to be the live music.

At this point we didn't have a name. Stewart wanted to do the posters and flyers so was pressuring us for one.

By this point our lives revolved not only around music but getting drunk. It was during a drunken night out that a near stroke of genius on my part led to real stroke of genius on Neil's part. I had acquired a baseball and was sat playing with it in some bar and noticed some writing on it. It said that the baseball had a solid core centre. I showed Neil and suggested we played the gig under that name. Neil shook his head. He placed one thumb over the start of the wording and his other thumb over the last part. This left just 3 letters.

L I D.

“our band is called LID” he smiled.

The drum machine plus my rough vocals gave us a sound that was like Big Black mixed with early Sisters of Mercy with a tad of Motorhead thrown in for good measure.

As the gig date approached Neil developed the flu and was concerned not just for his health but for his stage persona.

We would have to cross that bridge when we came to it.

Little did we know then, but his ill and weak state that night would lead to him doing something that would make him a legend. The set was going to be four songs long. This would take about 20 minutes. We rehearsed and rehearsed and rehearsed some

more. Man we were tight and it was gonna be good. As I say, Our only concern was Neil's health. But it would be ok.

## BULL AND BUSH. AIDS NIGHT.

For me the enjoyment of playing live was not just the gig. It was the getting there early and setting up. Having pre gig drinks and doing sound checks, being recognised as the artist and swanking about like we owned the place. Having that little buzz in your tummy before going on stage. Having after gig drinks, getting the gear home and then listening to the tape of the gig.(we recorded everything, even rehearsals. I have them all in a box in my loft)

Gig day came and we set up nice and early. Our amps were so big we didn't need a p.a system. 2 amps 2 guitars and one mic stand. On top of Neil's amp was a keyboard we would stick keys down on with tape and on mine was the drum machine.

The disco was till ten when we were due on for our set then the disco until 11pm.

Man was Neil rough. Moments prior to us making our debut he could barley stand. "your on , lads!" came the call.

I helped Neil on stage and got him a chair which he placed in front of his amp, facing his amp.

Our assistant Richard bought on his lemsip and put it by his chair. There we were, me stood facing the crowd of about 70 people and Neil who was sat with

his back to them sipping his lemsip. “ ONE TWO THREE FOUR.....”

BANG.

Off we went, ripping through our set at break neck speed. I even sped the tempo up on the drum machine to really rip their hearts out. It was loud and ferocious and menacing.

Now all this was to much for our assistant Richard.

During our last number which was entitled Wake Up! Richard came on stage and began to play the tune on the keyboard.

At this point all hell broke loose and the landlord came rushing to scene. Luckily we had about done when he pulled the plug.

Apparently the Bull and Bush was only licensed for duo's. Three on stage performing breached that.

Controversial from the word go. Brilliant.

Little did we know that night that having the plugs pulled would be a regular happening during our ill fated career.

As for Neil , the bass player who has his back to the audience, this night would add a feather to his cap that he was never fully at ease with. Neil had become an object of sexual desire to the Young women of Torquay's alternative music scene.

MOONBEANS

Leftwing Stewart had a brother called Alistair.

He was the young man that almost 2 years earlier had spoke to us in the falcon. He was a big fan and a good friend. He was honest enough to express his concerns about the drum machine and kept pestering us give him a shot on the drums.

Despite our better judgement we gave him a shot and booked a rehearsal with him. Stewart had got us a gig at Exeter arts centre in a couple of months, so if it went well we could try him there.

To our amazement it went very well. Alistair was actually very good, but it gave us such a different sound that LID songs didn't transfer to real drum sound well at all. Due to this we wrote a new set with a new feel entirely. It was kind of like Loop mixed With Spacemen3 plus a bit of Bauhaus thrown into it also.

I guess we ran through the 3 long songs about four times prior to the gig. We decided to play under a different name so as not to confuse to LID material with this stuff.

We were to play bottom of the bill on a local band extravaganza.

That night we were to be called The Moonbeans.

We felt like real rock stars that in Exeter and as we made our way on stage we had no idea we were seconds from disaster.

The underlying problem that night was that whereas for Neil and I it was always so easy, for normal people such as Alistair you have to work hard and stay focused. In the seconds leading up to the start of

our first song Alistair lost focus and therefore began to play a drum beat that neither Neil or myself recognised.

This in turn lead to Neil playing a bass line that I didn't recognise. Was I meant to do? Well I will tell you what I did do.

I looked to Neil for support. He appeared to be smashing his guitar into his amp. So I joined in and smashed my guitar to pieces. We stormed off stage. Alistair, oblivious to this due to his dark glasses was on stage for a further 20 seconds playing this unknown beat before noticing we had gone.

He fled and joined us backstage. His girlfriend was furious and they proceeded to fall out.

To our amazement we heard a cheer from the arena as the hundred or so in attendance applauded our efforts. Some guy came up and said " wow guys, great show" and gave us £25 . We didn't need to give Alistair the bad news about that being The Moonbeans last gig. He quit the band the next day.

So it was back to just us. LID once more.

But we had learned something very important that night....

Drum machines don't make mistakes.

Don't forget your history. Alistair was never in LID...

He played one gig with The Moonbeans.

## LIDLESS

Keen to re-establish our LID identity we decided to

go into a recording studio and make a demo of sellable quality.

We used Torquay's leading sound engineer. His name was Jake and his recording studio was his house. Miles of cables and piles of what was at that time state of the art recording equipment seemed to fill each room. It was a chaotic mess but cool at the same time. We set up and we were ready to roll. Jake was in a separate room to us and told us via headphones when to go.

I remember it well "Tapes Rolling!" He whispered. We were so well rehearsed we just played them straight off. I sang live as we played. No overdubs or layer build ups for us.

That first demo was a classic. The songs were as follows-

- 1- Funky whore
- 2- A fast and friendly service
- 3- Desposition
- 4- Lidless
- 5- Coming up roses
- 6- You will be dead

Our intention was to run a number of copies off and sell them at forthcoming gigs.

## SUMMER NIGHTS

We played these songs in that order at our second gig under the name LID at a complete dive called The Parrot. All the usual people attended plus a few more. We managed to sell about 8 of our LIDLESS tapes

and we got paid in Lager.

By now it was mid summer 1987 and we felt that we should enjoy the fruits of our success and really try and relax after our busy year so far.

We had a new nightly routine. 8.15pm at the bank, go to the falcon until 10pm, then go to the castle till midnight.

Downstairs at the Castle was Torquay's answer to upstairs at Eric's. (joke).

The resident DJ was a disabled lad called Jess and he played a fine selection of the best new music and classic album tracks.

(Blue Monday and Whole of The Moon).

Largely due to Neil we did seem to have a rather large number of female friends. This however didn't lead to masses of sexual encounters and girlfriends. Far from it. Both too naive to see what the intention of our group of female friends was, Neil and I were too busy enjoying ourselves and letting the free drinks roll in. Don't forget that all this was set against the backdrop of one of England's finest seaside resorts. That's the beauty of towns like Torquay. Life is like one big holiday. That next year was one big holiday.

We both had different jobs to those shop based Y T S 's from those years earlier. I was in a book shop and Neil was in a printers. But in those days it just didn't feel like work. We could stay out until 1am and still be fresh for work. We lived for the night and it was good. Very good.



I think we went out and got drunk every night for well over a year. Our entourage grew and the party didn't look like ever stopping. Caught up in the whirlwind we forgot about one thing.

.... The music. But hey. Who needed music when you had sun , sea , lager and Moonlight.

My main bug bear was Saturday working. "get yourself in a factory" grumbled my father. "weekends off and good Christmas holidays. More pay each hour as well."

Do you know, he was right. It was time to get us factory jobs

It was now 1988 and my liver and kidneys were hurting.

## SLOW DOWN

"Slow down" I hear you cry.

We have gone from Thomas watching the chitty men in the present day, to memories of Elvis dying in 1977 and to getting drunk with Neil in the late 1980's at breakneck speed.

"what about the fish and chips on the dark country road?"

Oh yes. This is a great ghost story. Its also true. Uncle Jack would never tell me a lie.

It was in 1960 that courting couple Jack and Frances decided to spend some time alone . In those days they didn't live in Wales. They were midlander's like my mother. But Wales had a calling for them even in those early days of their relationship. To get away

from the humdrum and mundane they had decided to take a long weekend away together. It was a spur of the moment thing and they just packed a small overnight bag and headed off in the car to Wales. Not south but north.

You would think when watching the recent television campaign that Wales has only had miles of beautiful countryside since

1998. But that's not true. Even in 1960 Wales had many square miles of mountains, valley's and countryside. Always a free spirit (as he is to this day) Jack just headed off to see where the road would take them. As late afternoon became early evening

Jack found himself slightly lost as he drove through the Welsh country lanes. Darkness fell and a slight sense of panic began to

Creep up on Jack. To cap it all the car ground to a halt.

The young couple kept calm and sat and studied the map they had until they felt they had found where they were on it.

It appeared they were a couple of miles from a village.

They decided to walk and get help, or at least find somewhere to stay.

They walked...and walked....and walked. By now it was getting quite late and they were both beginning to feel the pinch.

Just when all seemed hopeless they became aware of someone approaching them from where they were

heading.

They were confronted by an elderly gentleman who by his appearance and smell was clearly a homeless vagrant. He stopped them and asked what they were doing at such an hour walking through the dark lanes. They explained their plight and told him where they thought they were heading to.

The old man confirmed they were on the right track and that the pub had several rooms to let. However, with the late hour the possibility of food was out of the question. He was known to the people in the village and he lived in a self made bivouac in the nearby woods. The local fish and chip shop that had just closed

had given him the leftover fish and chips at the end of the day.

This was a regular occurrence and he never said no. As luck would have it another kind act, courtesy of the pub's landlord, he had eaten a sandwich not long before. "I don't need this bag of hot fish and chips, you two have it and eat it up as you walk to the village. You're not far off now, it's about 2 miles further on."

Jack and Frances accepted this kind offer and thanked the gent and carried on their way. An hour later the fish and chips were gone. Jack and Frances kept walking. And walking. And walking. Far from 2 miles down the road, they must have done about 5 miles.

By the time they found the village it was nearly

1.30am.

The landlord was not to happy being woken at this hour, but business is business and he settled them in.

They recalled the act of kindness from the man they had met but expressed confusion at how hot the food was compared to the time and distance they had travelled.

The landlord's jaw hit the floor.

“I know exactly who you are talking about, but its not possible, Old Sam died last winter...”

## SOAP OPERA

The factory job I ended up getting was at a cruelty free cosmetics company. They made shampoo, perfume, aftershave and lotions. My initial task was to bottle shampoo and help in the making of small batches of product. I had struck lucky with my timing as they were considering producing there own range of soap. For some strange reason they felt I should oversee this operation and be in charge of the eventual soap production.

They acquired a small industrial unit about 100 yards away from the main factory and filled it with the basic equipment to produce soap. We brought in the actual palm based noodles that formed the actively cleansing agents. All we were going to do was add fancy colours, nice smells and therapeutic oils.

As soap factory manager I was given the chance to employ 2 people to help me. It was very basic stuff and once we had mixed the ingredients, extruded the

billets and pressed the billets into bars, the main task was to then hand wrap each bar.

We are talking 2000 bars a batch.

My first choice to help me in this task was Neil. Once the company owner realised I had employed a mate he thought it best he found the second staff member himself.

Enter the amazing Lisa. Amazingly annoying Lisa.

Lisa was a nice young girl and did work quite hard, its just that now Neil and I could spend all day together, and remain sober in the process, we wanted to spend this time planning our next move musically. We knew we had let things slip due to our excessive drinking and socialising. Time was ticking and 1988 was passing us by. How could we stand around chatting about music while Lisa wanted to stand around chatting about what position her boyfriend had taken her in the previous night. Clearly lies.

The only people who talk that openly about all the sex they are getting are people that are not getting any.

She used to always wipe things down with bleach for no reason.

She would also empty a load of bleach down the loo after she had been. Her other annoying habit was asking you to comment on her general appearance. I admit, she was a very attractive young woman and she knew it, but she also liked hearing people confirm it. Not only would she wash her hands in the toilet, but she would re wash them in the sink out in the

main factory area. This annoyed Neil greatly. Now I like to think that I was and still am a fairly nice person and I know I can say the same for Neil. But that day I don't know what came over the pair of us.

It was about 10.30am and Neil had gone to the sandwich car and got me my morning usual. An egg mayonnaise roll, a packet of

Cheese and onion crisps a can of coke and a mars bar. This was cleverly abbreviated to "eggma , che-on, ca-co, ma"

This annoyed Lisa, that 2 grown men would find such childish code language amusing. She picked the bottle of bleach up and scuttled off to the toilet.

" god she bugs me" grumbled Neil.

Neil looked at the kitchen area taps. We knew she would come out and re wash her hands.

We both thought the same thought.

I paused. I pondered.

"no time to think, man. Just do it." Said my friend.

He was right. It was time to act. I took out my you know what and urinated all over the taps. I had just put it away when she emerged. Sure enough she went straight over and turned the taps on to wash her hands. During my life there have been many occasions where I have laughed so hard I have been unable to breath and thought I was going to die. This was such an occasion. She had touched my wee. I'm sure she thought us both mad as we collapsed laughing.

## NO LAUGHING MATTER

The sad news of the death of one of my uncles had a large impact on my mothers family. The man in question was one of her sisters husbands. A young fun loving fellow tragically taken in road traffic accident. I didn't attend the funeral, but did travel up to Burton to visit some relatives later that year. I took the opportunity to visit my uncles grave.

I don't know what made me read the headstones of the neighboring graves, but I did. A cold chill ran through me as I realised what I was reading.

Spencer Lloyd 1969-1987.

This was one of my best friends when I was a small child living in Burton. He famously confused Torquay with Turkey only a few short poorly written pages earlier.

Friends forever indeed. I had never even bothered to write him a letter. On previous family visits I had never even popped to say hi, even though he lived one house from a house I regularly went to when in Burton.

I did some research and found out that Spencer had passed away in a motorcycle accident.

Its not just Elvis Presly, Sid Vicious, Kieth Moon, Uncles and grandparents that die... normal young people like me die also.

That means I could die. I had never thought about that before.

As I urinate on taps and laugh at other peoples misfortune and get mindlessly drunk day in day

out.....people are dying.

If I was going to die I wanted to leave something to be remembered for. A legacy. A statement of who I was and what I

stood for. Upon my return to Torquay Neil and I had a meeting.

“we need to make a record and fast.” I told Neil.

“lets do it, man!”

## LESSONS IN HATE

How different my life is now compared to 20 years ago.

Not worse. Just different. Actually in many ways a lot better. Happily married with 3 great children.

What more could I want?

Well not much. Top of my list of wants is a location/setting change

I need a return to sunny Devon. I love Devon.

Sadly I do not live in Devon . I want to and I wish I did. But I don't. I live in Burton On Trent.

Burton On Trent is a small but growing town in the midlands. Its where they make marmite and lager.

It's also where the oldest monastery in Europe once stood. I say once because where it once stood is now a market square.

It's also the town where Victor Meldrew once found himself bizarrely being transported to in a classic episode of One Foot In The Grave. It's the place where poundland opened its first store.

There isn't a lot more to it than that. The council



estates are awash with super skunk and heroin. The unsuspecting people all kept passively stoned so they don't aspire to anything more than just wasting their lives away in an unfulfilled haze. Tragic.

Double tragic as I am raising my family smack bang in the middle of it. Don't get me wrong. Burton has some nice money filled streets.

I just don't live on one of them.

Maybe if I did I wouldn't hate it so much.

A garden for the children would be nice as well. Many council homes have large gardens. I don't live in a council house. I live in a housing association home in the middle of a council estate. We have a yard. I want a house in South Devon with a big garden.

I work in a car manufacturing factory. 2 weeks of nights and 2 weeks of days. This means I am always tired.

Because I work we would have to pay for the children to have hot school dinners. I cant afford it so they have sandwiches. Because I work we pay our rent and council tax and we pay for prescriptions. Because I am not medically obese I had to buy a car with my own money. Because I go to work I don't get a

reward for being lazy of £100 a week.

I know people without jobs who lead a life with a higher standard of living than me. So clearly second on my list of things that would make me a little more at ease with life is not having to spend 50 hours a

week away from my family doing a load of old rubbish I didn't want to be doing. I wouldn't want to financially compromise myself to achieve this, So I would need to have made some money somehow so that we could all live comfortably. I think that after what has been a prolonged absence from the rock n roll circus that was my crazy life I would also like to have the time to perhaps create some more music with my old friend Neil.

So my little list of 3 things to enhance my life are in effect to live in Devon, have a load of money and play my guitar.

Is that so much to ask?

Apparently it is. A symptom of Blairs/Browns Britain is that Normal people are now outpriced in the housing market and in Towns like Torquay a cardboard box next to the municipal dump would cost about £265,000. Shocking.

So what can I do?

And how did this happen? Wasn't I on the verge of musical success and receiving artistic acclaim?

Didn't I once make an excellent record?

What happened?

How could such hope and promise end in me becoming what I would class as a 'normal' person? I thought I was special. Aren't I special? It's strange because I am frighteningly close to being a 40 year old man but I still feel different. I am special. I must prove it in some way.

## BACK TO THE STORY

Through the remainder of 1988 and all of 1989 we giggered hard and recorded tape after tape of material. We selected 6 songs of varied styles and feel and decided to put them on a vinyl 12inch e.p. Jake the sound man had by this time moved to a proper studio in Exeter. We booked in to record our masterpiece.

Ex moonbean drummer Alistair came with us to provide light relief with his good humour and support. He also took pictures to record this monumental day.

As for the music, well once again it was all too easy and we just ploughed through it in one effortless take.

That day we recorded the following-

- 1- The motorised youth
- 2- Re groovable
- 3- Tear
- 4- A fast and friendly service
- 5- Ethan... he loves rock n roll
- 6- I like you. (in small doses)

Being special people with special talent we were sure that this selection would be our ticket to the world.

We had the master tape and needed to make it into a record.

The best sound needed the best acetate cutter. This is the master that the records are made from. Its when the sound of your music is put into the actual plastic.

it's a strange process. The flat smooth disc is put onto what looks like a record player. The tape is played through some equipment and the needle works in reverse.

It cuts the groove, and in a way that I am too thick to understand or explain, leaves the music in the disc.

If you know anything about music before it was something you downloaded off the internet then you will have heard of George

Peckham. George Peckham cut the acetate's for many of the Beatles records. In fact he cut many acetate's for many people.

Look on the very inside groove near the centre of your record collection. Do you see the words Porkey Prime Cut written in small letters in the middle? Yes? Then that's George Peckham.

That's who we wanted to do ours.

Tape in hand Neil and I were heading off to LONDON.

London, where the streets are paved with gold and everyone is happy. Where pearly kings and queens dance to the sound of the bells and people from around the globe live in harmony.

I remember the train journey like it was yesterday. We were so excited.

It felt like we were really important. Going to London to get our tape made into a master disc. Not only that, due to Neil's cleverness he had had the presence of

mind to book us in at a pressing plant to drop the master discs off.

They would press 500 copies of our e.p and send them to us in Devon. So there we were in London. Kings for a day. Georges place was near to Picadilly Circus. Smack bang in the thick of it. God it was so exciting. We went in a tad early and some other band were just finishing up. It was some bunch of shoe gazing idiots who will remain nameless.

“betamax!” laughed George as he looked at our tape. “Where did you record this...the Shetland iles in 1979?” he chuckled.

It would seem that Jake’s stuff in Exeter wasn’t as state of the art as we thought. George had to go into a cupboard and dig out an old betamax player to hook up to his computer.

“D.A.T is what we are using in the civilised world these days lads!” A pioneer of music since the 1960’s, this friendly scoucer made us feel welcome and relaxed. I don’t think he liked our music. But that didn’t matter. We had a porkey prime cut.

And I will tell you something else...to my ears through George’s Massive speakers our music sounded fantastic.

The process didn’t take long and before we knew it was done.

Master discs in hand it was time to trek across London to the pressing plant.

It’s hard to describe the strange buzz that you get when visiting a city like London but there is

definitely a feeling that goes with it. Those cheeky chirpy cockneys know how to make you feel welcome. The noise, the dirt, the price of a can of coke, the inability to say thank you, the inability to say please, the clogged pavements and the underlying sense that these people felt that simply being Londoners meant that they were better than everyone else. Hey what do I know?...they probably were and probably still are.

Despite our negative observations we did have a great day and upon our return to Devon felt very self satisfied. We had done something that nobody else we knew had come close to doing.

It called for a celebration. We spent the next few months drunk.

Then the records arrived. 500 12 inch records.

LID. The Suffocation E.P.

That first morning at the YTS in 1985 seemed like an eternity ago.

Yet here we were at the start of 1991, a household name for the kids of Devon with a record to sell and a string of gigs to play.

If I am honest, the 5 years to this point with Neil as my friend and co band member had been us just having fun. We were on the verge of something big without really trying very hard at all.

## KINGS OF 1991

Without being pretentious and after inspiring ourselves with the invention and destruction of the

moonbeans, we played under several different names during our career.

Due to the increasing aggressiveness of not only our music, but our general demeanour both on and off stage, we decided on a more permanent name change. LID became Lessons in Hate.

This name change came just in time for a gig in Exeter in mid 1991. It was once again bottom of the bill at a local band extravaganza.

This was to be our biggest triumph to date. For 25 minutes we played a medley of new and old to a jam packed arts centre.

To say we were loud would be an understatement. It was earth shattering stuff.

Me, Neil, a drum machine, some keyboards with keys stuck down. A tape with cleverly edited sounds and dialogue on it playing in the background and about 50 of our own Torquay

7fans going crazy at the front. It was amazing. The girls loved Neils back to look at as he rumbled his big black bass.

After the show the triumph continued. People who had purchased the suffocation e.p by LID re-purchased the same record re-packaged as Some Early Lessons In Hate by Lessons In Hate.

This in itself sparked an idea that would see us soon shift all 500

Quite quickly.

Dead Gods In A Box - the collection.

Temple Stampede - Earth songs ep.

Banana Miscouri - lost songs.  
Not forgetting the LID and Lessons In Hate  
versions....yes.. You have guessed correctly. It  
was all the same record. Ha Ha.

Anyway, back to the gig. This night helped us  
go on to be voted;  
Best local live act.  
Best Local record.  
Best local band.  
Plus best prospect for the future. This was in a  
magazine.  
Event south west. It covered from Bristol to  
Lands end.

Wow. We had nearly made it.

Time to step off the gas and take a well earned  
rest. We had a pile of cash that a female fan  
had given Neil.

(no... really. Girls gave him money and  
clothes.. Amazing)

We wanted to spend some time abroad so we  
spent her money.

We used it to go to France.

## YOUNG PARISIANS

Paris was everything London had not been.  
Clean, friendly, Spacious, cheap, classy and  
warm. We spent the nights in youth hostels,



and the days wandering around this wonderful city. The metro made Londons tube  
Trains look like a complete ramshackle. The buildings were So grand and elegant. It didn't smell of dirt and sewage. The best thing was that you could get beer anywhere at any time. This was great until a rather unfortunate incident on top of the L'arc de Triomph. It was a rather sunny weekend and perhaps I had misjudged how dehydrated and drunk I had become. We made our way to Top of the L'arc and looked at the breath taking views. My feet Began to hurt so I sat down to remove my trainers. The next thing you know I am coming around from being Unconscious with Neil pouring a bottle of mineral water over my head and face. A semi circle of amused tourists stood laughing at me. "come on man, lets get you out of here." Neil helped me to my Feet and down the long flights of stairs. Weak and delirious Neil felt I needed some food. He was peckish as well . We made our way to a burger king. Neil was in front of me in the queue and when it came to his turn he astounded me by ordering his meal in French! It sounded like he was actually French. I didn't even Know he could speak French. The dumfounded assistant behind the counter frowned. A colleague of His laughed and said "Englais". He spoke to Neil in English and

requested Neil re ordered his food In English.  
They hadn't understood a word! Crazy.  
Despite our so far nieve and childish resistance  
to the advances Of our female associates in  
England, being in Paris for a warm and Sunny  
weekend had opened our eyes to something.  
Girls may have more uses than going to the bar.  
It would be worth investigating this further  
upon our return dear to old Blighty.  
This wouldn't be the only thing Neil would be  
looking into when We got home.

#### EDUCATION EDUCATION EDUCATION

Despite local success, Neil began to get the  
feeling that perhaps we were not about to be  
heralded on the international music  
scene as gods. Despite his clear intelligence he  
was largely unfulfilled in his academic  
achievements. His plan was to do a  
Friday night course to get the A levels he  
needed to get in to University the next year.  
This worried me in two ways. My first concern  
was how I would Cope without Neil on Friday  
nights. Secondly, how could we tour the world  
with Ministry if Neil was at uni?  
Would he commute between shows to attend  
lectures and exams? Oh no....then It hit  
me.....What if he didn't need to comute?  
What if we had run our course?  
Neil wasn't going back to education as a hobby.

He wanted a Qualification to get a desent job.  
Neil had grown up. He would proberbly be  
getting a girlfriend aswell.

Shocking.

True to his word Neil began his Friday night  
course rather soon and I was at a loose end on  
Friday nights. The dynamic of our  
relationship with our friends was very much as  
a duo. Now just me on my own I wondered  
how I would react to them and how They  
would react to me. The simple answer to this  
was that a few of us went mental and  
stepped up the rock n roll to the next level. I  
don't just mean Fridays either...2 A levels in  
one year require a lot of work and Neil didn't  
go out much in the week anymore at all, apart  
from the odd gig.(both as a performer and  
audience member).

During this time I did kind of see where Neil  
may have been Coming from. We weren't  
getting any new people at shows.

Just the same group of hardcore fans. The  
seaside seemed like a bit of a trap. Backs not to  
a wall, but the water type of thing.

MARQU AT THE MOON

Through a friend of a friend one Neil less night  
I met an interesting fellow called Mark. He  
was so interesting he spelled his name Marqu.  
He was in many ways everything Neil was  
not. He told lies, had no regard for anyone

other than himself and was openly offensive to anyone he encountered. He was also however one of the most amusing people I and my Falcon buddies had encountered to this point.

Even rivalling my old mate and former Le Rage front man Andrew. (main difference being class. Marqu had none )In Neil's absence I found myself, along with a few of our 'gang' spending quite a bit of time with this Marqu character. By this point people like Alistair and Geogh and Phil had passed their tests and had cars. So after nights out we would pile in The cars and go for spookey late night drives to Dartmoor.

Dartmoor is a wonderful place at any time, but at night it is amazing. Due to the lack of light contamination the stars and Moon seem to shine extra bright against the black back drop of space. Its and area steeped in mystery and legend. Monsters and ghosts abound on every torre. (Devonian for large hill, Usually with granite on top.) One such legend is the story of Jay's Grave. On one of our late night expeditions we decided to visit Jay's grave. Here is the background story of this grave.

Many years ago in olden times a young girl called Jay was said to have been raped by a young man who worked on the farm that she lived and worked on. She became pregnant by the attack and this brought shame on her. In the

1700's it was the woman's fault. Left with no option she hung herself in a barn

on the farm. No parish wanted to bury a suicide girl so they put her on a bit of land where several parishes kind of crossed. A

'no man's land' as it were. (it turns out it is where some lay lines also cross). From that day to this fresh flowers appear on the grave everyday. A road has since been laid right by the grave.

So the situation is this... A solitary grave in the middle of nowhere next to a road. On the grave fresh flowers everyday, and the report from some people that in the dead of night a shadowy figure can be seen kneeling at the grave. This needed looking into.

Our convoy of full cars headed to the grave for 'our most haunted' type vigil. We parked the cars nearby and walked to the grave. It was nearly midnight and pitch black. As we walked

down the country lane I found myself thinking of the story my uncle Jack had told me about the fish and chips. I thought about

my childhood haunting in my parents guest house also. I felt a chill run through me. Our new associate Marqu was in fine

fettle as he blasphemed and disrespected the dead. Once at the grave we all stood around it and made a mental note of the amount of flowers and the colours of them as well.

We sat down on the other side of the road and waited...

midnight came and went. Nothing happened. We all presumed the flowers would change as a new day began. We must have been wrong. What an anti climax. We went to the cars and

decided to head off elsewhere. We had one last drive by .. “Jesus Christ stop the car!” yelled Sarah. We piled out.

The bunch of flowers was not the one we had looked at sometime earlier. An air of disbelief swept over us. “no way” said Marqu as he picked up the flowers and threw them over a nearby hedge.

This proved to much for some of the girls and screams and tears rang out. Inspired by this reaction he went to then urinate on the grave. Luckily the flash of car headlights approaching

halted this act and we got back into the cars and made a hasty get away. Clearly the ghostly legend was true. Due to the shot nerves of some of the girls we called it a night and headed home.

With fear comes adrenalin. What’s that old saying? “The most Fun you will ever have is when your scared!” Just like my teenage burglary. Marqu Knew we were all scared that night. The entertainer, the ring master, the dark master of mind control, the lord of the night. The fire had been started and he knew how to fuel it. So the next night when Marqu suggested we go to Berry Pomeroy Castle and do a ouija board , even the girls who

had been crying at Jay’s grave were right up for it.

By this point. After my life experiences I firmly believed in the afterlife, ghosts and the supernatural. Yet there I was like Sarah, eagerly agreeing to do something I knew was fool hardy and wrong. Berry Pomeroy Castle is an ancient ruin on the back road from Paignton to Totnes. At midday it is a terrifying place and at night that terror is multiplied by 100. It smells evil and you don't want to go there. So as we sat in a circle in the woodland by the front gate at 1am you can understand that things were a little tense. There was ten of us that night and the cars had been parked at the top of the road leading down to the castle. We couldn't drive as a gate blocked the way. We had walked down

the long dark road all holding hands and shaking. Its at least a mile from top to bottom, and hearts were pounding. Once settled and seated Marqu got out the glass and the board.

Geogh had a small torch so we could see what we were doing.

Of the ten only 5 of us put fingers on the glass.

The obvious question of "is anybody there" was Marqu's opener. Now I know that I wasn't pushing the glass so when it

spelled out YES I did get the heaby geaby's.

Without further prompting it went on to spell out that the 'GIRLS ARE WHORES'.

Maybe the negative force of 5 fingers being lifted off the glass at speed is what made it fly off the board and smash with force into a tree. Or maybe it was that

the evil spirit that had just terrified us threw the glass in anger. Either way terror gripped us all. As we began to panic and run back up the road to the cars a fog engulfed us and we became broken up into small groups .

I found myself with Alistair and Phil. We could hear the others but could only see each other. Then in the fog we could see strange lights coming from the direction we had been sat. The lights were accompanied by the sound of...the sound of galloping horses. “stop” screamed Alistair grabbing me and Phil

by the arms. “What is happening, Phil?” he tearfully and desperately cried. “At a guess I would say we are lost in a ghostly fog and are being chased by men on horses carrying

lanterns now run for gods sake!” shouted Phil.

As Phil then continued to run he tripped over an ankle high chain barrier of some kind. He smashed his face on a rock and badly damaged his front teeth.

As Alistair and I helped Phil the

horses drew closer. We dived into a bush as they passed us. We didn’t see them, just sound. It was too foggy to see them. Once

they had passed the fog cleared and the panic seemed to go away. We could no longer hear our friends. We headed on up the hill to the cars. Our concern was Phil’s bleeding mouth. We walked briskly and reached the cars quite quickly. Once there all of our friends came out of the cars. The three of us



were completely taken aback as there seemed no way what so ever that anybody could have reached the cars before us. “where have you been for gods sake.?” they all asked.

“what do you mean? , what about the horsemen, what are you going on about?” It transpired that they had been waiting for us at the cars for half an hour. That’s half an hour after they had

spent 20 minutes Looking for us. After the glass had smashed and we all ran off Alistair, Phil and myself had simply vanished. They saw no fog and heard no horses. Our watches

said 1.30am. The other seven said 2am.

No elaborate hoax. All the clocks and watches at home were all 30 minutes ahead compared to mine also. I was mortified.

We had lost some time and had been taken to some kind of strange dimension. To this day I can offer no explanation for this event and rarely speak of it.

As for Marqu, he didn’t seem shocked or surprised.

“All of these things, including your childhood stories are nothing. I have a truely terrifying tale that will make your heart stop. let me stay at your house tonight and I will tell you.” He

whispered to me. “fair enough.” I answered.

So back to my house it was. I got him a sleeping bag and he got

comfy on the floor. We lay in the dark, by now it was gone 3am. I was still shaken from the Berry Pomeroy incident. But nothing

could prepar me for.....

## PREDGE

Marqu was an artist and had studied at Plymouth College. To far to commute from his mothers Paignton house he took up a bedsit in the student area of the city. All the other occupants of the building were also students and as you can imagine things got pretty wild. All except a rather subdued youth on the top floor. Clearly a troubled individual he kept himself to himself and didn't mix with the other dwellers.

Marqu tried and tried to get the youth to come out of his shell, but it seemed to be to no avail.

Then out of the blue the lad approached Marqu with a couple of bottles of wine and suggested he come into Marqu's room for a drink and a chat.

Marqu was surprised but pleased. They sat and chatted about college, life, politics and girls. It all seemed fairly normal and the lad appeared more happy and relaxed than Marqu could ever recall seeing him before. He enquired as to the upward and positive aura he was now giving off.

The young man explained that he had been so down because an evil spirit called Predge had been tormenting him for several months. Predge had smashed up his belongings, made him get poor grades, wouldn't let him sleep, Cursed his mother, who had then become ill with shingles,

made him vomit during lectures and had been making him hallucinate scenes of horror at inappropriate moments. He described Predge as being about 2 foot tall and resembling a

gargoyle on a church roof. He had red glowing eyes and an annoying wheeze.

Marqu asked why this would make him happy.

The lad told Marqu he was happy because Predge was moving on to some other poor sole.

He bid Marqu goodnight and left. Marqu turned out his light and settled down to sleep. As he did so he became aware of a

bizarre noise in his room. He looked to the corner where the sound was coming from and there they were, 2 little red eyes peering back at him.....

“ Im sorry Marqu but you will have to do better than that to stop my heart.” I laughed in the darkness. “ I aint finished yet...Why do you think I came back here. I’m not just telling you about Predge..I am dropping him off here. He wants to stay with you next, hes here now ...listen...” We lay in silence until sure enough I heard it.....a chesty wheeze from the far corner. I looked over.....and there they were..2 glowing red eyes.

Marqu bid me farewell and left my house. I swear for a moment I thought my heart had stopped. The light stayed on until the morning and I didn’t sleep...for days. As for Predge ...I didn’t see him again and Marqu didn’t

mention him again. Maybe he didn't like my mums cooking.

What Marqu did mention however on another night in the falcon was that he thought we should get some LSD.

## GOING MAD ON ACID

My first LSD experience was at the Glastonbury festival in 1987.

I had gone seperatly to Neil due to travel issues.

There was myself, Glenn, Marcus(don't confuse with Marqu) and of course Andrew.

In thoses days gaining access to the site was pretty much a free for all. We parked Marcus's green Morris Minor and headed for one of the official entrances. We had tickets. Many people didn't and were climbing over the fence. A girl struggling to reach her friends hand for her final 'pull over the top' caught my eye.

I offered her a leg up. It was raining and muddy so for my trouble of being her human ladder I found myself quite dirty. I didn't mind. It was nice to help.As I stretched to full capacity to give her the last push I found myself grabbed by the wrists and yanked over the top as well!

I found myself in the site standing with the girl and her group of friends.They had helped me over the fence as a thanks for helping their mate. I showed them my ticket. We all burst out laughing and went our separate ways.

I admit I climbed back out and caught up with the others so I could have my wrist band.

It was a good line up that year. Many great bands including Husker Du, Woodentops, Gaye Bykers On Acid, Pop Will Eat Itself, New Order and Julian Cope.

We thought it best to enhance the weekend by taking the mind blowing drug LSD. Due to the possibility of being ripped off we thought it best to buy 3 different types of the drug off 3 separate sources. One was a square piece of paper with a strawberry on it.

One was a slightly larger piece of paper with a penny farthing bicycle on it and the last was a micro dot secured on a piece of sellotape . It was Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1987. We had set up our camp ,ate some tea and were ready for the night. We consumed our LSD, swilled it down with lager and smoked some marijuana. We then set off toward the music stages. I was so excited about seeing New Order that night. We hadn't gone far when Andrew complained about his throat. He was convinced the cello taped micro dot was stuck half way down and he was struggling to breath, swallow and speak.We had some more to drink and smoked some more drugs to see if it helped but it didn't seem to.

We watched some bands and tried to just enjoy ourselves, but Andrew was in some distress. I volunteered to help Andrew back to our tent. By this time it was dark and thousands of people lay between us and the tent.I was lost within seconds. It felt like

an eternity of stumbling , bumping , tripping , staggering and saying sorry to people. But at last...I had helped Andrew back to the tent.

He more or less crashed out immediately so I just lay and listened to the music in the background. New Order were on at this point.

They sounded great.

The stars and the moon looked wonderful, and between the lasers and satellites Im sure I saw several shooting stars. The planes shone there lights down to illuminate the little blade of grass people who were reaching up and trying to tickle my arms.As the blue wolf asylum staff enjoying their day off came down in their hot air balloon to give Jesus his lemonade to drink and his apple pie to eat I could hear the cracking of bones due to cat nip in the freezer zone waterfall washout, plus the daisy powder arse candle from Spain had just emptied the bun flux catalogue hotel.

Yes...I was completely out of my mind. I should have realised when I thought the stars looked good. I was in a tent for gods sake.

At this point an exited Glenn and Marcus returned.In a rare moment of clarity Marcus explained we were going so mad because all the LSD we had taken had worked.

The night desended into compleate insanity and continued into the day.As for Andrew...well he was right. The micro dot had lodged in his throat. Because of this it hadn't desolved with ours. The next morning

it did make its way into his stomach.

As we all began to get a grip around lunchtime that Saturday an unfortunate Andrew began to come up on the micro dot. Crazy.

That LSD experience was so relaxed and done in good faith.

It was like being on another planet, but not a nasty one..a nice one.

What I was to find out some years later with some of my other Falcon friends is that LSD and its effect depends on who you take it with. After attempting to urinate on a grave, doing a Ouija board that transported me to another dimension and leaving an evil spirit in my room I guess that even contemplating taking LSD with Marqu was the most ridiculous thing I had ever done.

But hey, that's Rock n Roll, and I was... Rock n Roll.

## 2 PATHS

So, back to late 1991 (or was early 92? I don't even know). Following Marqu's suggestion on page 53( "lets get some LSD") A bunch of us acquired some LSD. The plan was to take the drugs, smoke some weed and go for a walk. Torbay is a lovely place and with the obvious visual enhancements that the LSD would bring ,we all looked forward to our night. All was going well until Marqu began to point out that some guy was following us. It was late and dark and we were playing on some swings in a kids playground. We couldn't see who he was on about. I

was to transfixed at the skin dripping of my hands. When we looked he said that the guy was stepping back behind a bush. I felt about 8 men were watching us.

We began to feel uneasy. LSD is mind-bending enough without trauma like this. Was it real? Was he really seeing him or lying?

He then said it wasn't just one man, but about 8. We were surrounded and due to our non compass mentiss state may well

be about to get hurt. We ran like chickens through the park. The 8 men began to chase us. I couldn't see them but I could feel them. Could hear them. My legs were jelly and I couldn't run. We stopped to make sure we were all together. The men jumped into the bushes out of sight but they were watching us. We had inadvertently entered a grave yard. Once we realised this we began to fall to bits. Pursued into a cemetery by 8 invisible men who wanted to hurt us whilst pretty much lost on LSD , my lord...it was a bad feeling. I couldn't imagine anything worse. Until it got worse. Marqu pointed out we were on a pathway. At the point of the path that we had stopped on, it split into 2. We were not sure where each path lead. Marqu stepped forward and took centre stage.

“We must choose carfully...this is no ordinary path. This is no ordinary choice. One leads to Evil And one leads to Good.

The path you choose tonight is the path you choose for life.”



Well that was pretty much about all I could take. I wet myself and ran back the way we had came and I slept it off in a bush by a tennis court. I suppose at this point I should write a paragraph on on the pitfalls of this horrible drug and say how I never did it again. LSD is a horrible and dangerous substance and I am sorry I took it and I don't think anyone should take it. I never took it again after that night.(well, not for a few months anyway).

All this driving round, being terrorised by demons and freaking out on acid was all very well and good, but I was missing Neil.

I know we worked together all day but it wasn't the same. If he passed his exams he would be off to University and I would be completely lost.

## PUBLISH SOME TOOTHPASTE

Having sold many of our records plus sent many away to record companies, it was only to be expected that someone would like it. So when a London based company called us to discuss a publishing deal we were not surprised.

We arranged to meet the two men whos company it was.It would be at a services half way between Torbay and London. I think it was some kind of Little Chef on the A303 at about 8pm.

We met the men and discussed the in and outs of the publishing

deal they wanted to offer us. We got the impression they had links with another artist who they wanted to

re record one of our songs with. There would be money in it for us. They had the contract to sign with them. Being an idiot I almost signed it there and then. Neil halted me and asked if they could leave us to chat on our own for a few moments. They agreed and got us more coffee and sat at another table.

Neil aired his concerns.” Im sorry, man but I am not going to do business with these men. Nothing you can do or say will change my mind.”

“why?” I asked.

“Well the first thing that put me off is the teeth of the guy doing the talking. They have a creamy cottage cheese type coating on them and it is making me feel ill. The smell of gas coming from his dirty mouth has made me almost vomit twice. The second concern is his tie...it looks like the wall of off dirty protest prisoners cell. Tell them to forget it and lets go”.

We returned to the table and I looked to see what Neil had been on about. I even leaned forward to try and inhale the gas and see the cheese. Jesus christ, Neil was spot on. As for the tie...it really did look like a dog with aids and diarrhea had used it as toilet paper.

Deal or no deal? “No deal” We made our farewells and left the bemused men sat with their coffee and bad breath, contract unsigned. Whilst I agree with Neil’s rejection motives, I did however realise that unless another offer came our way, or I won the lottery, that Neil would be going to university.

I WANT TO BREAK FREE

Low and behold, Neil did attain the qualifications he needed to

get into a university and in September 1992 he would be going to study at Wolverhampton.

It wasn't just Neil. It seemed that a lot of people I knew were off to see what this fine country had to offer them. A sense of being trapped in the south west peninsula, surrounded by sea and seagulls had stirred a wander lust inside the youth of Torquay.

Our numbers had already dwindled as many of them had fled from the nest.

I have to admit, maybe there was a world out there that had more to offer me than £20 and flat lager for my talent.

To go to Wolverhampton with Neil was the obvious first thought but Neil was serious about his desire to get a degree. I would be a major distraction. He wouldn't be able to focus on the music and the drinking and studying all at the same time. If this is what he wanted to do then I would respect his wishes and give him the space he needed. Should I stay or should I go? If I go then where to? Decisions decisions....

Well after much deliberating I decided that I would leave Torquay and spend some time travelling to and from towns and cities where I had connections, for example family in the midlands and Wiltshire. Friends in Bristol and London. And acquaintances in Manchester and Birmingham. I guess I was sort of inspired by our family holidays as a child, only my

visiting round would be a rather extended one. Where to head first was a difficult choice, but there was no rush. I had a while before Neil was going and I wanted my leaving to coincide with his. It wasn't the end of the music for Neil and I. We made a pledge that we would have music weekends where we would get together and record new material.

It was a pledge we kept for many years.

In actual fact the music that We recorded over the next few years was by far and away superior to anything we had previously done.

Sadley, due to a lack of live performances and a bizarre uncontrollable laziness that led to us into not bothering to promote ourselves in anyway, much of it remains unheard by anyone other than Neil and I. I'm talking about 40 completed songs and about 12 hours of jamming. All on tapes in bags in my loft right now. Amazing.

Whats even more amazing than the music I still managed to make with Neil, is the unlikely chain of events that would steer my life over the next decade.

September soon came and Neil toddled off to Wolverhampton.

For me it was going to be Bristol. I had friends at college there and via a friend of a friend was offered a room in a shared house in Bedminster.

BRISTOL CITIES

What a nice city Bristol is. Have you ever watched casualty? Well its filmed in Bristol and many of the supporting actors are from Bristol. That strange accent they have....its not a BBC joke. Its real. True Bristol people have that voice. I love it. Do you know why I love it? Because even though its not quite the same, it does have a loose , vague and similar sound to the accent I love most. That endearing south westerly twang that mildly echoes the Devon accent. I do not have an accent. If the truth be told, if I don't swear and haven't had an alchoholic drink and I am talking to someone about a serious subject I do sound rather well spoken. The amusing thing about that is that people often miss judge a well spoken person as a well educated one. When you realise this is happening you can entertain yourself by playing along with it and being the person whom those your interacting with think you are. I use long words and pass comment on world issues. I can keep it going for quite a while before people realise the truth....I'm actually a complete idiot. Ha Ha.

My dad has a welsh accent but he isn't an idiot. " Ive never started a fight but Ive ended quite a few" he would grumble.

Him and his younger but larger brother used to have a reputation

in the Rhymney valley . It began at school and continued into adulthood. At one stage people would travel to Bargoed at the weekend looking for them to fight.

A gang may have had the upper hand. But one on one...no chance.

Winning a fight is 40% physical and 60% mental. If you believe hard enough you can take what someone has to offer and walk through it and deliver your answer with double the ferocity in return then you will prevail. This however has no relevance to

The current tale.

Where was I?. Stupid accents.. Being well spoken.. Valley fights

Oh yes ...Bedminster, Bristol. Lovely.

I liked Bristol....

Its like a city but with a country side feel.You are just a small drive from many lovely places. Wookey hole , Glastonbury, Wells Weston Super Mare and Cheddar Gorge to name just a few.

Via a friend of another friend I made friends with a curious group of people who lived near to the world famous district of St Pauls.

The clear leader of this gang was a chap called Andrew.

Bristol Andrew was different to Torquay Andrew. Torquay Andrew was a bit mad, but Bristol Andrew was totally insane, but nice with it. Being basically alone in big city like Bristol I was glad that anyone wanted to be my mate in any capacity.The shared house type bedsit thing I lived in was a bit strange so I liked to get out and about. Having a place to go and hang out at was ideal for me. I had an alcoholic ex hells angel and his girlfriend in the room below. A

fat and sleazy labourer from the then still being built second severn crossing in the room next door and an obsessive martial arts expert in the back room. The other downstairs room had a guy who nobody ever saw in it. I didn't feel entirely at ease when everyone was in. The sound of domestic violence from downstairs and the sound of violent masturbation from next door was a bit much for me. So I latched on to Andrew and his little gang. I will be straight with you. They were basically a gang of drug dealing criminals... but nice with it.

I had at this point got myself an old motorbike to commute about the city on. A yamaha rs 200. A nippy 2 stroke that was my pride and joy. I would park it in the street over the road from their second floor flat. I could clearly see it from the lounge.

My constant curtain twitching was a great source of irritation to them. St Pauls was a mainly Black stronghold and Andrew's place was a stones throw (no pun intended) from the front line, a street the police had major reservations about even driving down.

As white hopefuls knocking out a lot of gear to allot of people my new associates were undoubtedly treading on many toes and were living in danger. Situations like that require heads to be kept down and profiles to be low. Curtain twitching was not the thing to do.

"For Gods sake.... Nobody is going to steal your bike!" snapped Andrew as he sat in his dressing gown

putting yet another 5ml medicine spoon of base amphetamine into his already loaded can of iron bru. "Nobody is going to steal your bike.. because Its rubbish!". Shocking.... How dare he call my bike rubbish.

If the curtains had been open I wouldn't have had to touch them.

Neighbours was on the television. The pupils, iris and whites of his eyes merged into one black window and the surrounding skin

Seemed red and sore. He looked at the t.v and then back at me.

"Is this the one o clock episode or the half past five episode?" He enquired. I had to think for a moment. I hadn't even taken any drugs but I felt spazzed out.It was the one o clock edition.

We laughed. These were powder and pill guys. Despite the drawn curtains and nightwear the flat was spotless and well organised. Clothes ironed and dishes always done kind of stuff.

Hoover the hall at 3am culture.

The only thing I didn't like was the comings and goings of people I didn't really like. But as drug dealers that was part of how they lived. Andrew and his crew as I have said were clearly nice people playing the system, providing a service and trying to make some cash to enjoy life with.

Unfortunately some of the people that needed their services were not so nice and I was exposed at times to the kind of sinister drug fueled mind play that can



lead to real trouble.

Its how that kind of behaviour is delt with that can make or break a person.

I recall one such incident that shocked me greatly and made me realise just how serious these guys took their work.

The key to underestimating Andrew was the fact that he was so naturally amusing. Anecdote upon anecdote would leave rooms

full of people having asthma attacks with laughter.

Ever the clown with often self deprecating tales, the odd scumbag would think him a soft touch and fail to notice the constant eye contact passing messages between Andrew and his three flat mates. The chair incident best illustrates this.

Some guy came to get some things and stayed for a while.

Some cocaine was taken and some weed was smoked. Some beer got drank some jokes were told.I guess that there was maybe 8 people in the lounge that night and things seemed ok.

The guy was seated on the floor leaning back on the sette near to the coffee table. This wasn't by choice. There was no available seat. None available until Andrew went to the toilet.

He wasn't even out the room when the guy went to take his chair.

"Don't bother" said Andrew as he went.

This guy ignored him and sat in the seat.Upon his return an unimpressed Andrew requested that he

vacated the seat. The guy amazingly refused. Andrew calmly left the room once more.

The next bit took everyone except Andrew's guys by surprise.

He came back and marched up to the guy and put a gun in his face. He leaned in close and hissed "you need to get out of my chair now. I cant stress how important it is for you to do as I say" into the guys ear. He wasn't laughing. Nobody was laughing. The guy went white and left.

With the recent upturn in gun crime I look back at this incident with horror, but at the time didn't fully appreciate the seriousness of such behaviour. Guns , knives and drugs are very bad things. I'm not telling this as a form of glorification.

I am just recounting moments from my life. I wasn't taking notice as to the rights and wrongs of peoples behaviour.

What I did notice at the time was that I was indulging myself with Various substances more often than I thought I should. Andrews lectures on the enhancing qualities that amphetamines could have on both the mind and the body were very convincing. A song by the sisters of mercy called amphetamine logic seemed to back this theory up. Plus the fact that my room was always tidy, I seemed to get more done and I thought about things more clearly when I had taken some. Yes, I was enjoying the clear clean structure that came with base amphetamine usage. I also lost a lot of weight and my testicles and penis seemed to

become small and shrivelled ..even more so than usual.

I even got a job....working in a petrol station. It wasn't far from the Bedminster ASDA, and was opposite the river. I quite liked that job.It was laid back and most of the time I was alone.Early Starts and late finishes plus all the ginsters pasties I could eat.

On a recent visit to Bristol I was saddened to see that the old elf Petrol station had been demolished.

Things ticked along nicely for a few months until a rather bizarre chain of events meant it was time to leave this fair city.

During this time I was trying to have a relationship with a girl.

This is tricky at the best of times. Constant consumption of drink and drugs just added to the difficulty and well...well to be honest I cant even remember what was going on half the time.I think I kind of had a moment of clarity and realised that I had only been deluding myself that life was neat and structured. I was a mess and needed some space and time without drink or drugs.

The grass seemed greener and the party was over. I looked at the newspaper on the table in the pub where I was sat drinking and thinking.That's when I got the shock of my life...the date.

1st March 1994. I had been in Bristol for 18 months and had achieved nothing...except for getting blasted and stealing pasties. My relationship was in tatters

and I wanted to go home.

I phoned my dad and he came up the next day and got me.

It wasn't her fault and it wasn't my fault...it was one of those things. My brain was shot and I felt empty.

## BRAVO TWO ZERO

Just imagine how I then felt to get home to Torquay and find that my cousin Pete had moved in with my mum and dad and was in my old room....I had to use the spare one.

As you can imagine I was destroyed and fell ill with glandular fever. These were very low times for me as I spent 3 and half weeks in bed. Weak and skinny and in pain I had time to reflect on my failure to actually achieve anything.

Pete came in to see me one day before going to work..he had a big book in his hand. It was Andy McNabb's Bravo Two Zero.

He suggested that I read it. For christs sake I could barley lift it let alone read it. Why would I want to read about a failed mission? What was he trying to say? Cheeky git.

Of course I did end up reading it. I did enjoy it. Yes the mission failed ,but hey...he's done alright since with all these daft books

He keeps writing.

This daft book inspired me to get better. It was half term for Neil and he was back in the bay. Time to get out and celebrate.

It was now April and I needed a drink. It was a great night and it seemed everyone was out. We did the Falcon (by this time re fitted and re named The Townhouse) and went to the Piazza on fleet street. We were steaming and things seemed great. I even had a female friend suggest we get it together...tempting...but it was to soon to consider such a thing...but I was very flattered.

What a great night.

Then word got round that the death of Kurt Cobain had been on the news. I saw Nirvan at the Bristol Bierkeller and at Reading. (not the headline year...the year before in the afternoon when he hurt his arm jumping into the drum kit.)

I was deeply saddened to hear of his death and it put a real downer on the night. Plus Neil would be going back to Uni in two days time. As quickly as I had felt better I had sank back to rock bottom....

I bid farewell and left. I soon discovered I had a pint of lager in my coat pocket! (no really.. I did!)

Angry and sad I threw the drink at the post office window. Bugger me it only went through it making a hell of a mess and a noise in the process. Glandular fever or not I ran pretty fast from the scene of this mindless crime.

Once again I had to make a big decision. Pete in my room, Neil back at uni, Kurt dead and my glands up again.....what was next for me?

The answer came from the most bizarre occurrence to this point so far.

## THE ASTRAL TRAVELLER

So there I am, in bed in the spare room..Im trying to relax...and then it starts...the vibration. Then a strange sparkly light behind my eyes. The vibration was in my chest and spine. It was building to an almost orgasmic feeling.

A detuned radio hiss then filled my head and I began to lift up and out of myself. My heart was racing but I remained calm. A steady hand held my arm and guided me away from the bed.

And there we were...me and a young man floating in the air overlooking my sleeping body.

He didn't speak outloud. He just put the information in my head.

He was a spirit guide and he was concerned for me. He had helped me out of myself so I could see the bigger picture. Still holding my hand he pulled me through the window to outside where we both flew up to the roof.

I looked around us.....there were hundreds of people flying around all over the place...Astral bodies..spirits..ghosts..whatever you want to call them.

I needed to leave home and rediscover myself. I was going on a long journey that would ultimately lead to personal fulfilment beyond my wildest dreams.

**BANG**

Then I was sat back in my body in my bed wide awake.

Crazy. But not a dream...it had been as real as im sat here now typing it nearly 14 years later.

Since that night I have had many lucid dreams, astral encounters and spiritual moments.

Amazing. A word of warning... next time your going through someones stuff or sniffing some knickers just remember, you may have about 10 spirit guides, an earthbound phantom and a living astral traveller watching you.

Of course there is always the chance that 17 years in 66 pages had driven me quite insane and I imagined the whole thing. Either way I moved out and went to live in a bedsit ten minutes away in a large building called ridgeway house.

## BIG KNOBS AND DRUMSTICKS

At 6ft 7inches, Leroy was and proberbly still is a big guy. He was the drummer with local band 'spar' and he lived in ridgeway house with his then girlfriend Helen.

I guess at the time his sugestion that I move into the newly vacated room next to their's seemed like a good idea....

It was a large Victorian building that had seen better days and the 8 large rooms were let to unemployed wasters.(of which I was now one.)

The next few months would prove to be very intresting indeed.

Where do I start...Oh yes...Torquay Andrew(not to be confused with Bristol Andrew) had suffered a

terrible personal loss.

He was at an all time low and several issues were eating him up.

To ease his pain he was regularly taking a selection of drugs.

Of course as a true tower of strength to my oldest and closest friend I provided 3 things for him, somewhere to take them, someone to take them with, and a good ear to off load his thoughts to. This kind of thing happened maybe 3 times a week. Leroy was out a lot so I spent the remainder of my time with his

Helen and her friends.. Sally, Kate and Samantha. They were students of some kind and liked to get drunk. Missing Neil and still low from the relationship breakdown and glandular fever I threw myself headfirst into my new routine.

So once again I found myself on a merry go round of drink and drugs...shocking...Looking back I guess I may not have been thinking to clearly and found myself in a number of compromising situations and was fully involved in what can only be described as several 'wild' nights.

The account I am about to tell of one of these nights Is a typical example of how the next year or so was spent.

## MR ROCK AND ROLL

I felt the pain that Andrew was going through. I didn't enjoy seeing him in this low state..but I wont insult yours or anyone elses intelligence and deny that



getting off my cake stand with cocaine, bass amphetamine, marijuana , ecstasy and booze was fun. On the night in question Leroy was out and the girls were having a party in Helens room. I think that Andrew had found himself a little fan club. He had other things on his mind so wasn't overly impressed with the door knocking and drunken giggles that broke the ambience of my humble pad.

As we sat in my very basic room getting smashed listening to music, watching t.v with the volume down and chatting about absolute balls , the girls got progressively drunker and louder.

He didn't specifically say that he was leaving earlier than usual because of them, but Andrew slipped off at about 1am. I was as they say 'bollocksed'. I lay on my single mattress and put on Never mind the bollocks heres the sex pistols. Strange that with all my hundreds of records and all I had been through thus far that when when push came to shove all I ever wanted to listen to was either meat is murder by the the smiths or never mind the bollocks by the sex pistols. Between these two records I have all I would ever need to quench my emotional thirst. Nirvana unplugged also helped sometimes...and I did love my collection...but the smiths and the pistols pretty much have it covered. What a dullard I must really be and how my wife and children must loathe me...yes...I still listen to these two albums most of the time today...(Im writing this page in 2007!!!) The story in question would be around the early 1995 ish type

period..forgive the vagueness,

I was lost for a while back there..anyhow..

So there I am.. Battered but relaxed thinking of trying to masturbate when the girls burst in and sat on my legs and held me down. It was “ Andrew” this and “Andrew” that.

Im not a sex monster by any means, but I did enjoy this attack..

Helen, Sally, Kate and Sam were in their own way each quite nice.The aggressive interogation as to which one of them Andrew liked was a pleasant experience. But( and there is always a but) My drug induced state of mind got the better of me when drunk Helen produced a scalpel from her ‘art tool box’ and threatened to stab me if I didn’t give the correct answer.

“go on” I said . “Cut me.. If you dare”

Well she dared. She sliced my left forearm with a 2.5 inch slash that left little to the imagination.

I soon straightend out and kicked off big time.All of a sudden they were not heavy enough to keep me down. Girls and blood seemed to fly all around my room.I was ’f’ ing and ’jeff’ ing like a man possessed.

Things were just about to get out of hand when a still drunk Helen picked up the sound of LID.

My Ibanez roadstar series two 1983 issue.

A girl was holding my baby.

Bare in mind I had purchased this in 1990, second hand for £300.

The fact it was mine( don't forget I was still semi famous at this time) must have made it almost priceless.

“How dare you lose your temper when all I did was do what you dared me to do.” She hissed. She then put the guitar

through my window (which was closed). My room was two floors up. Seldom in my life have I been speechless. I was on this occasion. “Don't bother getting angry about that.. You think your Mr Rock and Roll...that was Rock and Roll.. Get over it.”

And that was that...they upped sticks and left. Apparently I

Had spoiled the evening. The wind and rain poured in the now none existent Victorian sash window. Jesus it was cold. I used U2's unforgettable fire, The Jesus and Mary Chain's Darklands, Ultra Vivid scene's mercy seat and The Velvet Underground and Nico's record covers with plenty of gaffer tape to cover the windows wound. I wrapped a manky tea towel round my arm and climbed into .....Christ sakes! No I didn't. I had a girl in my bed. An unconscious Samantha lay on my mattress trashed. I jumped up and nearly had a stroke. I suppose finding a 19 year old girl in my bed should have made my day, but I was cold, tired and confused. How had I ruined the evening? I did what any self respecting man of the 90's would do. I Got my jacket and slept on a chair.

The aftermath of this night would be that over the next few nights the girls gave each other similar cuts

on their arms to the one I had. Over a decade later my scar still shows...I wonder if theirs does. As this was just one of many nights where things got broken, people got injured, people passed out and I slept on a chair it wasn't surprising that Leroy found himself slightly agitated at the time that was being spent in my company.

This did lead to a late night fall out that left him the wrong side of a locked door on our landing. I did the decent thing and invited him into my room. We shared my mattress and a 2 litre bottle of old rascal cider. He taught me how to make rollies with his pack of cutters choice as we watched Nirvana unplugged on video. What a nice chap, and a great musician. Despite our bonding the fact was that I had caused the problem between him and Helen. He didn't hit me. He did something worse..he kept my copy of the grease soundtrack that had found its way into his collection via Helen on one of the crazy nights.

The arrival of a heroin addict on the top floor sparked a mass exit from Ridgeway house. I moved into the building that Sally lived in, not before that filthy smack head made off with my Daws mountain bike. I hope he has since died of aids.

This mass address change altered the dynamic of our little group. My time was now exclusively Sally's. Andrew got his head together and immersed himself in work.

Sat in Sally's room endlessly drinking and watching

t.v was a happy time for me. Her boyfriend was more chilled than Leroy. He could see that I was no threat and was glad that Sally had a male friend to look after her while he was off doing his thing. We had a really good time together. It was weird because some people actually thought that we were a couple. I think she wished we were. Poor Sally, she had clearly fallen for me. But I couldn't get involved.. I had things to do. I knew it was time to move on. I had again outgrown the bay.

Before that though I had some unfinished business.

One last gig in Torquay. Neil came home and we got ourselves a show. Downstairs at planet marmalade. A student dive that stank of damp. The plan was simple..5 new songs. No stopping until the end and more hate than Hitler. 'The life of Christ plate protection plan' was the set title and we played under the name Lobe Roter, but everyone new who it was.

This was our defining (and deafening ) moment. The p.a had broken so we put all our stuff(drum machine, 2 keyboards, a bass guitar, my guitar and my voice) through Neils HH bass cab.

The room was the size of a lounge but I swear we got about 45 people in it. Plus another 40 upstairs.It was crazy. Three things stick in my mind from that night.

Firstly was Richard Hughes leaving after 5 minutes holding his head, secondly was seeing Neil stood directly in front of and facing the HH cab with cotton wool in his ears, our eyes met . " I cant hear anything!" he mouthed. Lastly was Dan Louargia

(Drummer and film director) saying to me at the end “thank god you have stopped.. I had forgotten how to breathe.” And that was that. That was the end of my music career. The sad thing is that if any record company had had an A and R man at that gig we would have been signed up on the spot. It was amazing.I was amazing, Neil was amazing. Find the bootleg..you hear what I say at the end? “that was to good for you lot”

I meant it.

Bitter?

Maybe.Its all about lucky breaks and we never had one.

I moved back in with my parents. Singing, drinking, taking drugs and masterbating had detached my eye muscles. I took this time to have them repaired. What a horrible operation. Do you have a lazy eye? Get it mended if you are not squeamish. If you are squeamish then get some dark glasses. Its like being in a horror movie.

After conveying at my parents I put into action my ‘get out of Torquay again’ plan.

This was basically Torquay Andrew becoming Birmingham Andrew and needing somebody to keep him company.

I weighed up the options.It didn’t take much weighing.He phoned on the Thursday night with his ‘lonely in his new job’ story and he came and got me on the Friday morning.

Handsworth Wood was to be my new home for this

next part of my exiting life.

Wood... Handsworth WOOD.. that's different to just Handsworth...ok!

My state of mind had by this time become quite questionable, but the sound of Pretty Vacant being strangely played on daytime radio one as we drove through Birmingham that first time was in a way reassuring.

I saw Andrew grinning. Despite his personal tragedy he had come along way since we stole that drum kit. I however had not.

1997 was upon us in a flash. Where was my life going? What was I meant to be doing? Didn't I used to be somebody special?

I needed a job, and there it was in the paper..

Security guards needed. Immediate start.

"you could do that" said Andrew as he wracked up a line of cocaine on his fancy glass table in his lovely Handsworth wood flat that I now shared with him.

He was right. I could do it. It was late and I was battered but one last line before bed wouldn't hurt would it?

"the job you fool" he snapped.

"what job?"

"jesus."

## THE SQUALID STENCH OF DEATH

I guess the magnitude of my plight didn't hit me until I was sat in a security gate house of an abatour at

2.30am earning £3.40 an hour.

The main drain ran beneath it and the wash down from that shifts cull of pigs was in full flow. The smell of animal innards was quite overpowering. If their sad little faces as they get hurded in off the truck or the terrified squealing as they realise what's going to happen doesn't put you off then the smell of their intestine juices will. Bless em. As for the men doing the killing.. I didn't have much to do with them but part of my patrol was the staff parking area. Nice cars, really nice cars. They clearly earned more than £3.40 an hour.

Its very hard to be so utterly convinced that you were born to be in the realms of the rich and famous and be heralded as genius on a global scale but then find yourself getting to close to your late 20's than you would like to be, and to be sat guarding an abattoir on some industrial estate in the midlands.

Neil saw this coming and his University plan had earned him a degree in history and American studies. He was now armed and ready for the real world. I wasn't.

This was the worst job I ever had.

My new employers could see my dismay and recognised that I may have been miss-located. My polite manner and clear accent free voice saw me transferred to an office complex. Monday to Friday 7am to 7pm. I was over the moon. My tasks were to unlock and lock up, greet staff as they entered the lobby and help visitors find the office or person they



sought.

Im not a sexist womanising oaf but even I must confess that saying good morning to well dressed secretaries and lawyers and catching the aroma of sweet perfumes as they walked by and entered the lifts was another world to my previous placement.

All at once being a security guard was a good job and I felt happy.

The added bonus was that this left evenings and weekends free to get trashed with Andrew. The months rolled by and all seemed well. As an all round team player I was always happy to chop and change to cover any needs that the company had. This meant a few nights due to a holiday.(no not that abatur thank god).

It was at another office block that needed 24 hour manning. I was alone and made myself a little bed under a long desk in the reception area. I got comfy and put on my little radio and listened to talk radio. There was a cheesy feet smell that was coming from a pair of ladies work shoes, but that didn't bother me. I soon drifted off.

Little did I know as I fell asleep that I was to be awoken by earth shattering news...Sunday August 31<sup>st</sup> 1997. Yes you guessed it.

Diana's car crash. Mike Dicken was breaking the news of an accident. I had a bad vibe and I soon woke up. I was glued to the radio all night as events unfolded.

When he said she was dead I remembered Elvis dying

20 years earlier.

Another August death that made the world stop. During those 20 years only John Lennon had hinted at this scale of reaction. But he was small fry compared to Diana and Elvis.

I didn't know what to do. I hate the royal family but this was Diana... I phoned my Mum. Amazing. Diana dead. I'm not going to get all political and rant but why carry someone who was anti war and killing on a gun carriage? What a bunch of sickos.

But that is by the by. The fact was that I was clearly on an important timeline. Don't you see the pattern?

No? me neither... But how strange that talk sport DJ Mike Dicken should go on to die in a car crash some years later.

Like when after years of raising millions for leukaemia, Jeremy Beadle should then become ill with it himself. You couldn't predict these things. As Harry Hill would say " what's the chances of that?"

Needless to say I was both saddened yet inspired by Diana's death. The world was once again united in grief .

This tragedy on a global scale preceded a tragedy of my own on a smaller scale. Andrew had a girlfriend and she had a dog and they were going to move in. All at once the flat seemed very small.

JUSY SAY NO

Andrews girlfriend was basically a nice person and the dog was very friendly but (and there is always a

but) I didn't like her moving in at all. The best part of a year had gone by and I was more settled than I had been in a long time. I'd gone to Birmingham in good faith and was enjoying myself as well as trying my best to put my crazy life in order. The plan from the moment she arrived was to get rid of me. (her plan, not Andrew). She couldn't hold her mud for toffee and it was amusing to see her fall to bits by about 9.45pm most nights. If you can't take it don't do it, that's my motto.

Either way there's a crowd and I had had enough. It was time to leave Andrew and her locked in their own personal hell with the dog to distract them from the reality of their plight.

But where could I go?

Torquay? Find Neil form a band and try again? Tempting but no.

Neil was also living with a girl at this point and He needed every chance to learn for himself about life without LID.(pointless).

"hey" said my old mate Kate,"how about Manchester."

Manchester.... So much to answer for...

## 24 HOUR PARTY PEOPLE

Well what can I say about Manchester that hasn't been said before.

THE friendliest people in the world.

THE best nightlife in Britain.

THE most relaxed city vibe

THE city that never sleeps.

I got a little flat, I got little security job and got a ready made set of friends. You see as I arrived in Manchester Kate was leaving and heading back to the bay. Uni had not gone as well for her as it had for Neil. She introduced me to her mates and they just took me in and that was that. Drinks all round and life is sweet.

Levenshulme. How quaint. Its almost like weatherfield but without the cobbles. The enigmatic writer, broadcaster,director and actress Cath Nichols and her close friend Helen were the people who I mainly hung around with. Through them I met a variety of amazing people who opened my eyes to many things that I had no previous concept of. The first thing I realised was that without the music and Neil, and away from the Andrew comfort zone , and totally removed from all that I knew and understood was that I was a rather quiet, shy and boring person, who despite my rock n roll past was so up tight about a number of things that I could have bent an iron rod with my arse if one was inserted into it.(no change there then)The people I met were so open and relaxed about the drugs they took, the drinks they drank and the lives they lead. This of course included sex and sexuality. People talked openly about being gay, and bi-sexual. They didn't hide there sado masochistic desires. It was all out in the open and everyone seemed happy. A fetish wasn't a secret to be ashamed of. It was something people were

interested in and their friends were happy to indulge them. I found this fascinating and found myself having upmost respect for this city and its amazing people. However, I must state a fact. I am the son of a Welshman. And as the saying goes “you can take the man out of the valley, But you can never take the vally out of the man” She often forgets but my mother was raised on a council estate in Burton on Trent. Swap the word vally for council estate and read the above saying again. In short.. I guess I am old fashioned. Something’s don’t change over night, and despite my love of Manchester and its people I was close to an event that would help me decide to once again move on elsewhere.

Inspired by themselves and associates, my new group of friends decided to begin a once a month fetish night that would take place at varying venues around the city. The people in attendace would adhere to a dress code of a fetish nature and have access to dungeon equipment. Acompained by dance music drink and drugs, the revellers would party to the early hours and have kinky sex fetish fun.

All very well and good, I didn’t have a problem with that at all.

I still had a motorbike at this stage. A Honda Super Dream. Manchester is cold and rainy sometimes so I had procured myself a black motorcycle jacket and some black leather trousers in order to ensure safe and dry riding.

Sporting short hair and a pair of Dr Martin boots it

transpired that when dressed for motorcycling I passed the dress code. Well the prospect of going to a club and watching a selection of sexy rubber clad women whipping each other and standing on guys did appeal to me. So when one of the gang suggested I pop along to one of the nights I jumped at the chance.

## HOG ROAST

A cheeky couple of pills, 6 pints of lager some marijuana and I was well away. It didn't disappoint. The club was packed with an array of characters all enjoy the safe environment in which they could express themselves and indulge.

I don't even know the name of the club in question but it was like labyrinth with rooms here and there and nooks and crannies everywhere. This meant more than one bar and more than one dj.

As my condition began to deteriorate I stumbled my way to the area downstairs where I could hear the hardcore Belgium dance

Music blasting from.

Dry ice, flashing lights and strobe effects dazzled me as I tried to find a seat. It was very busy and crowded and in my battered state I was kind of bumping into people. I eventually found a stool and sat on it and composed myself. As the dry ice cleared and my eyes re-focused I found myself bearing witness to a most bizarre occurrence.

About 4 foot in front of me was a skinny guy with no clothes on.

He was on his knees with his hands tied behind his back and a blindfold on. Stood before him was a great big fat hells angel biker looking type of guy.( I must stress he wasn't a hells angel, I am just trying to give you a picture in your head of the general appearance of him ).

He was ramming his hard and massive penis violently in the tied man's mouth and ramming it down his throat.I spotted this just in time to see him pause and shudder, clearly reaching orgasm and ejaculating a bucket load of semen into the other guys head.

There was so much he couldn't swallow it all and the excess spurted its way out between the skinny mans lips and the big guys Penis skin.

I was horrified beyond belief at this vision and looked around to see if security were on route to eject these dysfunctional people.

I didn't see any security. That's not all I didn't see. I didn't see any rubber clad vixens lording it over any woman worshipping wimps. What I did see was that the room I had entered was exclusively full of men. Some of whom were being treated rather badly by the other men.

I wasn't expecting that. I wasn't ready for that. I wasn't... I just wasn't ....

Unwittingly I had entered the gay S and M lounge.

As I sat dressed in black leather and boots surrounded by gay dominant masters and their sissy bitches I realised that this really wasn't my cup of tea after all.

I eased my way out discreetly and headed home.

Feeling uncomfortable at seeing a man ejaculate into another man's mouth was as it turned out the least of my worries.

Word came from down south that my brother in law had become ill.

A is for Apple B is for Bath C is for CANCER

To my eternal regret I didn't at that point up sticks and go to give support.

Not because I didn't care. If I thought it was an urgent matter I may well have acted in a different manner.

You see I knew everything was going to be ok because people in my world don't die of cancer.

Cancer is what Bill Hicks, Dennis Leary and Derek and Clive joked about. It's what people on telly died of. Its something that people my cousin Pete knew died of. It was nothing to do with me and my family. As the updates began to get more serious I was hit by a wall of complete denial and un acceptance that the worst thing could happen. In my mind the moment I believed that the illness was real and life threatening, was the moment that Alan would die.

If I ignored the whole thing then it would all blow over and we would be chatting about his troubled time at Christmas. Hey, there may have been a mildly amusing anecdote in there somewhere.

An impassioned plea from my sister did eventually get me to visit.

By this time Alan was in a special place for people to



die of cancer in called a hospice. Shocking.

He was not conscious by this time and it was clear that he was not going to make the miracle recovery that I had been expecting.

A few days later it was all over and Alan had died.

From diagnosis to passing it was something like 11 weeks.

I had learned a very hard and painful lesson.. Again!

It wasn't just the Elvis Presley's, Sid Vicious's , Princess Diana's, John Lennon's and Pete's relatives that died....people like me and members of my family were able to die also. I didn't and still don't like or fully accept the concept of this fact.

My spirit guide may have been wrong. I had found nothing since leaving Devon. And the funeral? Yeah you got it... drunk.

It was time to go home.

It would be my cousin Paul who was going to take me firstly to Burton on Trent where I would stay at my other cousin Pete's house for a few days before heading down to Devon.

Pete and Paul were brothers.

1997 was not a long way from being 1998 and here I was on the move again. What was it all about? What was I meant to be doing?

TICKET INTO TOWN,DUCK

That first night on Pete's lounge floor I stuck on my walkman and listened to Never mind the bollocks here's the sex pistols.

I reviewed recent events while soaking in the sound.  
Whatever next I wonder?

Whatever next indeed. What happened next was totally off the wall and crazy.

Pete said I should stay in Burton for a while. He reckoned that if I let the council know I was on his lounge floor I would get a council flat. If I didn't get one I could then continue to Devon as planned. Sod it. Why not. I filled out the form and posted it.

I don't think I really expected to get a flat. I was humouring Pete.

I had to get to Devon and get Neil to reform the band. The next few days were spent drinking very heavily and watching Pete's video collection and walking around Burton reminiscing about locations from my early childhood.

And then it arrived. A letter offering me a flat in Winshill, a housing estate in Burton.

"Told you" said Pete.

This was a big decision. I viewed the flat and I loved it. But I knew to accept it would delay my return to Torquay....

They other key factor was that my parents were at this time in the process of themselves returning to Burton after 20 years in Torquay. My recently widowed sister was also planning a move from her home town of Salisbury to the Burton area.

I had a sudden attack of family fondness.

"well ?" enquired the man who was showing me around.

He had the form for me to sign on the kitchen sideboard and was waving the pen in my direction.

“I’ll take it” I said. I took the pen and signed the form.

This was to be the start of my big Burton adventure.

A town where 2 plus 2 is 5 duck and “mines a pint of Pedi”

(as in Marstens Pedigree ale. They brew it in Burton and it makes you trump).

Relatives and the YMCA filled it with furniture within a few

days. It was ace. I felt different from the moment I moved in. I had made the right choice. Burton has no music scene. Species in the early 1980’s nearly made it but drugs and mental health got in the way.(ha ha ... tell me about it ) and the Telescopes...well they were just talent less tripe. It has no fetish scene, that type of fixation requires intelligence. As for drugs..jesus, I will level with you....I had had enough. Drink, yeah.. Plenty of that. Proper as well. Six pints of Burton pub beer did what ten pints did elsewhere.

Nobody had a degree and nobody had nothing to prove. For the first time since 1977 I could embrace and show my routes.

Working class. Real. Down to earth. No delusions of grandeur.

I was right in the thick of it. Winshill was the closest I had been to how most people really exist. The women all had children and pushing pushchairs from

one side of the estate to the other was all they seemed to do. Wow. What a great life they had.

I would watch them as they struggled up the hill. Plain looking with no make up in jeans and tracksuit tops. Slightly gaudy jewellery and tattoos all over. Content that this was it. It seemed

normal. That's it. I wanted some normality and some babies as well. The first step to being a normal man in a town like Burton is getting a normal job. I applied for allsorts. Security, factories, shops and restaurants.

I would take and stick with the first that I got.

That turned out to be flipping burgers, gammon and eggs at a little chef on the A38.

I was rubbish at this job and found myself questioning why I was there. Indeed my spiritual guide had clearly made an error.

After 2 weeks of ruining peoples dinner I was ready to give my notice in. But ( and as you know there is always a but) then it happened. Love at first sight.

An ex staff member who lived about 30 yards from the building popped in to say hi to the bitchy two faced back stabbing lazy bitches that she used to work with.

I don't recall anyone taking such a hold over me in such an off hand and easy way prior to that moment.

As I burned another burger I glanced up just in time to see Helen enter the front door. She was stunning.

She had a white sport top on and black leggings. Her bleached blonde hair shone in the sun light. She was

clearly a teenager not on drugs who as well as being quite stunning also seemed a tad sad. As if something were missing from her life. Within 20 seconds of being introduced to Helen by one of the work-shy slapper's I decided that I was the item missing from her life.

As she sat in the staff room drinking a coffee and smoking a cigarette I was mesmerised. I wanted to marry her there and then.

Prior to this I had only had one proper girlfriend.( remember.. It fizzled out in Bristol a few pages ago ) I had made so many mistakes in that first relationship. But this would be different.

This was going to be the one. I was so excited about my new wife and forthcoming children that I overlooked one thing. Helen hadn't even noticed I existed and when she did finally take notice she didn't seem to like me. .shocking. Despite my plain appearance and dull personality, I did realise that quite a number of the females I knew and met did like me in a like me sort of way. I never really responded as some hoped I would. So why was I so struck with Helen?... maybe her lack of response to me was the trigger to my desire. If she had fell for me on first meeting I may have not been so struck. But I was and I wasn't going to give up easily. Luckily for me I had an unlikely ally. Kim was the only person I liked at the little chef. The shift after I had met Helen Kim said we would make a nice couple and asked me if I liked her. I nearly passed out. I confessed my

instant love and she clapped with excitement and told me she would sort it all out for me. Another visit that day by Helen prompted Kim to tell me it was ok to ask Helen on a date. This was a first. As mutual friends I had stumbled into my last relationship without ever doing the asking out bit all those years ago.

This was new to the max. Asking a relative stranger to be my girlfriend. Without doubt to this day the scariest moment of my life. Conveniently left alone in the staff room Helen sat in anticipation of my entrance. I shuffled in like a nervous school boy. We exchanged meaningless smalltalk and then I slipped it in. "Maybe we could have a drink sometime and get to know each other better." I saw her laugh awkwardly under her breath. I awaited her rejection. To my eternal surprise she said that it would be nice. And that was that. Let battle commence. I had a girlfriend. She was perfect. She was a working class girl from a working class background at a point in her life where she was ready to be swept off her feet by someone who would never tell her lies, never let her down, stand by her through the good times and the bad times, always put her first, treat her like a queen and satisfy her every desire.

Unfortunately for Helen she met me first.

I would brainwash her into wanting to have my babies and for us to do the whole settling down as a family type thing.

And why not? Cause when push comes to shove

that's what really matters. People having babies and being a family.

I was gone. Hook, line and sinker. After a couple of days in each others pockets and hearing her views I wanted more than anything to get her pregnant and get her in my council flat. Guess what? I did. I came right up her and made a baby. The connection was made. I had helped make a life. Maybe we could have waited until we knew each other better.. But that wasn't and still isn't how me and Helen operate. We are a 'do it' unit.

Its all impulse actions and deal with consequences later with us.

With my sexy teenage pregnant girlfriend I found a happiness I didn't think was possible. I left little chef and signed on. Helen moved in and life was great.

With her Italian roots Helen showed me a whole new side to fine food and wine that also hit the spot. It was like being in Goodfellas and the godfather. Being pregnant made Helen even sexier. This was a great time. Time rolled by and Helen was ready to pop. From sad to dad in 9 short months. I recommend this activity. Have a child. Go on. Do it now.

I wont go into the detail of child birth because it's not relevant to this tale.

What is important is that Helen and I lived in a council flat with our daughter Chloe and our 2 cats Thomas and Muffin.

No Neil, no Andrew's. Just A young Family getting by the best they can.

Hopping on a pushchair friendly number 8 from Winshill into town and getting ourselves a jumbo sausage and bacon rasher with a splash of chopped tomatoes in a long hotdog type bread roll was a good way to start our day. Even better was having the lady put a generous helping of grated cheese on top of it. Yum.

After all the shenanigans I had been involved in over the previous years to just out of the blue meet this girl and start a family and be living happily together in this busy little market town was amazing. Hey, I even think Helen was warming to me at last.

These midland system players had it all sussed. Helen suggested we apply for a bigger house. My one bedroom flat just wasn't adequate for the three of us. Council rules is council rules and hey presto... we got a two bedroom house with a massive garden just round the corner.

Not being famous and living as a normal person amongst normal people was great. I came back down to earth and embraced normality free from drugs and going out every night.

It wasn't all sunshine and roses though. Cracks and tension, just like what normal people experience, did appear.

After a couple of years we put the issues right by going for another Baby. Getting Helen pregnant was easy. We must both be very fertile.

It was a new century and I was immersed in my new life.



The next challenge would be getting a job and buying a house nearer to town before child two popped out.  
Job! Yuk!

## TOYTOWN

From my flat I had a great view across the town and on the horizon was a massive building that seemed to stretch for a mile.

I found out it was an international car manufacturer.

I remember quipping as I downed a bottle of Stella “I wouldn’t

Like to be one of the jerks stuck there on a night shift”

Well those words came back to haunt me big style.

You see that’s exactly what happened. Through a local employment agency I got a job at the car plant.

More than ever I would learn than work really is a four letter word. The agency induction day was pretty straight forward. A large group of terrified people of which I was one were given reams of paperwork and had company policy drilled into us before we were then split up and sent to our departments where we would stay from then on.

My name and Scott Braithwaite’s were called out. “press shop”

Said the guy. Some groans and sniggers were the response from people in the know.

I was not in the know and neither was Scott, whom I instantly liked and got along with.

Prior to this moment in my life I had given no

thought too, and had no knowledge of, how a car was made.

Well I will let you in on a secret... its an amazing process that I genuinely found interesting.

The coils of steel are put in steel stores. They are then put into massive machines that cut them up into appropriately sized 'blanks' that are put in piles onto giant shelves where people on forklift trucks come and get them and put them onto machines called 'transfer presses' that shape them into bits of car.

The bits of car are stored in pallets where more men come and get them and take them to more machines where they are welded together. The shell of the car gets put on track that takes them to be painted, then to have all the bits fitted until eventually being driven off the end of the line and to the awaiting trucks to take away.

Being a Japanese company this was done very efficiently by a team of well trained dedicated staff...of which I was now one.

Press shop is the bit where the steel is shaped into bits of car.

I guess the earplugs and stupid helmet should have made us realise that life would be more tricky than putting two screws into a fancy car stereo unit while chatting to a female colleague who was polishing the gear stick knob.

That part of the process was a million miles away from press shop.

As new agency boys Scott and I were going to be

tandem fodder.

Tandem is a row of four manually controlled presses that don't have amazing feeder bars to transfer the panels down the line.

No.. on tandem it was convayer belts and men that did the transferring. Real hard manual labour. Look at rabbit at work in the movie 8 mile... that's on the right track.

The permanent staff worked on the big fancy machines and pressed buttons and chatted as the presses did the work for them.

It took me 3 minutes to know what I wanted most out of my life.

To be taken on as permanent and get moved onto a real press. To achieve this I would have to work like dog and show that I was worthy. The dirt and the noise was horrendous. I had to dig deep.

I had a family to support and I wasn't going to let them down.

It was 9 miles from my house and I had at this time an rxs100 motorbike. The shifts were long and the weather was bad, the work painful and I hated it.

But I kept going and kept grafting. Not only did my new home life spur me on, but the people I was working along side also helped me to dig in.

I worked alongside a vast array of differing characters.

Not all were nice and polite though. Industry breeds a rare type of man. Smelly, rude, aggressive and back stabbing.

For the intelligent and fun loving ones such as myself and Scott , these meatheads were a constant source of amusement.

My other close comrade who began with the agency was big G. An Indian lad called Gaz. Between the three of us we were determined to try and laugh our way through the shifts.

Working at such a prestigious company made getting loans, credit cards and setting up a mortgage very easy.

Before you knew it we had found a house to buy and were spending like it was going out of fashion to have money.

## ON THE MOVE

Our new house was on the other side of Burton in an area called Stapenhill. Short street to be precise. One of the roads that came off Short street was called Heath road. I was born on Heath road in 1969. It had taken me 30 years to progress 200 yards down the road. “apples and trees” mumbled my cousin Tim.

The comment went over my head. He saw this and filled in the gaps. “an apple never falls far from its tree.. Like you and your move.” “oh yeah.” I replied. But this wasn’t the happy move we had hoped for. You see we were without the cats , Thomas and Muffin. I had put up a fence blocking youths from taking a short cut through my garden at our council house in Winshill. This didn’t go down well and there was confrontation. As if by magic Helen then found

Thomas strangeld in our garden and we never saw Muffin again. Burying Thomas in the cold rain in the dark was a very upsetting task that I will never forget. Strangely this small gap in our lives was soon filled as the people that had moved out of the house we had bought had left a cat behind. 'Trouble'. Bless her. What a nice cat she was.

As I put up the net curtain in the lounge that first night I noticed a young man having his face stamped on in the car park of the pub opposite. I called Helen to come look. "what pub?" she quizzed.

Quite right to. Up until that moment we hadn't previously noticed 'The Dart' over the road. Oh dear. A smack head paradise full of violent wreck heads and poorly educated in breads. Once more a past comment by my old Winshill neighbour haunted me as I watched the kicking in before me. "Stapenhill !! , you dunna wanna go there, its rough as houses duck." Well you live and learn. And I was really living and really learning... fast.

A week later saw an event that would really throw a spanner in the works and push me into doing something I should have done years sooner. My son Harry was born.

Now up to this point the past two years with Chloe had gone pretty smoothly. But it takes all sorts and Harry from the word go was a character and a half. The whole structure of our family unit changed. We needed more than a bus pass and a motorbike to make this work. I needed some wheels and a license.

## WAKE UP, TIME TO DRIVE

I took a crash course in an automatic with a guy called Robert. “point of turn.. point of turn!!?” He would yell while thumping the dash board, almost having a stroke at my poor efforts. After 6 two hour lessons I took my test.

To everyone’s surprise I passed. “My lord , that’s amazing” said Robert almost in tears at my achievement. If a second child had tipped the scales away from my and Helens favour, then me passing my test and my dad giving me an old Mercedes 230e clearly tipped them back. Show time. This new lease of life opened doors to a world of wonder for us all. It was an amazing period of time that was good and bad. I was so far removed from my previous incarnation that I began to completely forget about who and what I used to be. Even Helen changed from the girl I met at the little chef a few years earlier. We had gone from the fiesty vibrant couple we were and become ‘mum and dad, kids and car.’ I know that this is a dull thing in some ways, but in another way it was fun, and like being on a rollercoaster about to crash. At or around this time I became a proper member of staff at the Car factory. This meant a huge pay increase which lead to another loan and credit card. This in turn lead to more days out at leading tourist attractions, the odd weekend away in Devon and many meals out. We once got bored on a Sunday so we drove from Burton to Manchester, had lunch at

the Trafford Centre, then carried on to Blackpool where we had a walk around the pleasure beach. We then drove along the sea front and looked at the aluminations before heading back to Burton. It was a typical day for us.

Also going well was work. My hard work had paid off. I was moved from the torture of tandem to the prestigious CTR line.

Two big automated machines that could make 6000 interior parts each per shift.

A trucker would put the blanks on. An operator would do all the machine stuff and another trucker would take the pallets of full parts to the stores.

I would be an operator. What a relief this was. If all went well the hardest thing I had to do each shift was try and stay awake.

All was well until a strange thing happened one month.....

Since arriving in Burton and starting a family with Helen things had been pretty good. Yes, maybe we had our first child to soon, and yes, maybe when we were having problems between us that our decision to have a second child to sort things out may have been ill advised....and yes, Harry was a bit of a day destroyer who could bring us to our knees with despair..but (and not all butts are bad..) the thing is we were having a good time and had everything we needed. Helen now seemed to really like me.

Things seemed almost perfect.

Until.....

Until one day I sat down and went through our finances. I found that we had more going out than we had coming in. Shocking.

I got myself another credit card to cover the short fall. All at once my life became one of those adverts. You know the ones I mean. 'Picture' 'ocean' and 'Norton' spring to mind.

I had that strange tummy buzz you get when stood outside the headmasters office at school when in trouble. Little did I know then but this feeling would remain for a very very long time.

With a consolidation loan and a new credit card, plus my other credit cards all paid off things looked slightly healthier. We celebrated by having an April Devon holiday. Our average daily spend was £250 and the holiday was £350 for an out of season luxury cabin on a holiday park. Nice.

No sooner had we got off the merry go round of spend spend spend than we were back on it.

I had enough available credit to keep this high paced luxury life going for 2 years until the short fall would once again become obvious at the end of each month.

I didn't want my family, whom I loved dearly, to go without anything so I kept it all going as well as I could.

The days became weeks and the weeks became months and the months became years. Once again time had slipped by and I got a bit fat and I got a bit grey. The Roadstar series 2 gathered dust in the loft and reality started to bite.



As the grim truth of our financial ruin hit home another twist was to rock our world. Helen was pregnant again.

#### AS TIME GOES BY

So there I am in a story less than two hundred pages long in debt up to my eyeballs with two out and one on the way stuck in a factory in a part of the country I hate.

I guess things look pretty bleak. In another dimension I would at this point be sitting pretty on a fortune with a big garden and a driveway, but in a world without Helen and the kids and new growing bump. Sod fame and fortune. I liked what I had and would do all I could to keep them. Helen and I got married at a secret wedding with just a witness,

I only had one option at this point and that was to sell the house.

At this time the property market was going crazy.

An end terrace I purchased for £25,000 was valued at £76,000.

Most amazing about this statistic is that it had been less than four years since we bought it.

I told them to stick it on at £80,000 and we would hope for the best.

The best turned out to be £79,000. I still don't fully understand why but even after this sale I was still in debt to the tune of £30,000. On what? Cheesburgers, KFC, lager and holidays in Devon? Truth is I don't really know where the money went. But I know we

lived a good life. Better than all of Helens old school mates who always seemed short of money and never went out.

As the move date loomed out popped little baby Thomas.

I now had three children. Chloe, Harry and Thomas. Put in a slightly different order the initials of my children quite ironically ( but totally inadvertently ) are THC, the active chemical in marijuana. This amuses me.

The pressure was on. Private renting was too expensive and the council didn't want to know.

Thank the lord for Housing associations that take on desperate families that the council don't want. We were offered a three bedroom semi in Winshill on a well known street called Delhi Close. Beggars can't be choosers so we took it.

It was actually a nice modern house and when the door was shut

and the curtains drawn you wouldn't know you were on a street that was talked of with fear by the Stapenhill bad boys in The Dart as they hatched a crack deal scheme.

"Winshill !!" cried a neighbour in horror. " Dunna go up there duck.. Its proper rough."

Bad press more than reality , it was mainly families just trying to get high. Ooops! Get by not high. (LOL).

Even with cheap rent and a slice of debt paid off we were still left with nothing. I was out of options and

out of credit.

I had five bellies to fill and a tension filled the air.

What we had was not enough. What we could have on my wage without the debt would never be enough.

An awakening within Helen made her realise something I had long since forgotten .

Normal life is a trap to keep you down. The working class are fodder for the higher echelons of society to feed off. You don't always get out what you put in. Life just isn't fair. I had put in enough. I had had allot out in some ways, but I was dammed if I was expected to spend my life paying it back.

“up there with the down and outs.” as my mother put it. “how could you do that to your family?”

Well these down and outs seemed allot happier than she had ever seemed. It was so clear to me now what I must do. I remembered my uncle Jack and the games console.

I would file for bankruptcy and give up work . As Morrissey

said “England is mine and it owes me a living.”

I was either at work or in bed or tired or all three. I just didn't need that anymore.

I had my wifes full support and nothing would stop me. The paper work filled itself in. I didn't have to lie or exaggerate it was all true. We had no option. I was declared bankrupt and my debt was washed away like the judge was jesus washing away my sins. The earth had shifted and a weight had been lifted.

No mortgage and no debt. Not Even a bank account

in my name.

Despite failing on so many levels I was actually happy to be in this position. "What next?" I asked Helen. "your job.. Leave your job and lets get out of this town."

"Where to?" I asked.

"Where else...Devon. I want us to live in Devon."

Loosing the job was easy. The wolves were at the door at work.

Falling out of love with my normal existence had shown in my approach to my work and I was getting sloppy. Not only sloppy but careless. This was because I didn't care anymore.

I ground to a halt and stopped going. The writing was on the wall and the time was near.

As for getting to Devon , well we just had to find a house.

It sounded easy but the reality of the matter was almost hopeless. The property market was through the roof and this in turn had an impact on rental prices. We were free and yet trapped at the same time. I had given up hope so when Helen said she had put our house on home swap U.K I just ignored her. No one would want to swap a house in Devon with one in Staffordshire. No One.

So that's that. That's why I am who I am. A failed musical genius who went out into the big wide world searching for something that didn't exist. I found a wife and three great kids but all 5 of us want more than what we have. I am slightly bitter and twisted

and that wont go away in a hurry. Broke , bankrupt , depressed and without direction I now sit here with Thomas watching the chitty men take away our rubbish, dreaming of a house like on the mtv Show ‘cribs’ .But in Devon not LA. Dreaming of not having to die slowly in a factory in order to fund such a life. I want it all for nothing.

## PART TWO. DARTS ON THE RADIO

Where you just got to is not where I am now. Some things have happened and things are different.

I am different. My life is different. The world is different. You are different. Everything changes. Daily.

The concept of Home swap U.K is that residents with local authority or housing association landlords can just swap houses.

As Tommy Cooper said “just like that”.

We had given up hope of anyone wanting to come to Burton and had forgotten we had registered. Time slipped past us and we became embedded in our Burton rut. Watching people punch lumps out of each other from our lounge window became normal. Even at 5am. Crazy.

My childhood haunting, my astral adventure, my encounter with predege, my berry pomeroy time travel, plus my inner sence of my soul have left me 100% believing in a divine force that exists and guides us. When you put your trust and faith in this force then usually prayers can be answered . But

even my deep held secret belief that something would crop up was about to disappear for good, when low and behold we had a happening that confirmed that such faith would be duly rewarded. We had an amazing phone call one evening. A family who needed to re locate to Staffordshire for personal reasons got in touch to express an urgent desire to swap homes with us. It seemed to good to be true.

The amazing thing was that it really was true. They came to view our house within days.

Luckily for us it was on a sunny day when the reams of kids and gang members that often hung around were not on the close. No loud hardcore Belgium dance music was blasting and our neighbours Tammy and her sister Clair were not sat on the steps to the house smoking skunk. It was calm and looked inviting. They liked it instantly and invited us to come and view their house the very next week. Moments after they left the clouds gathered above and the gangs gathered in the road. Something kicked off and it was a load of 'f ing' and 'jeff ing' outside. Devon is a big county and our first choice had been Torquay. These people were from a village near Plymouth on the edge of Dartmoor. Nice. I put the address in google earth and looked from above. It looked like a village that was by some woods and near to the sea. A small drive to the city and a short walk to the moors.. I looked at the estate before me through the lounge window. There was no comparison. I knew I wanted to live there before I

even visited it. Torquay looked about about 30 miles away on the map. That's better than 230 miles! I felt sick with anticipation. I sat looking at the image on my screen for hours. Devon. Dartmoor. The sea. Home. My excitement was shared by the whole family. Helen, now 28. Chloe, now 8. Harry, now 6 and Thomas, now 2. We were as a unit buzzing and ready. The visit day came and we set off early.

By now I was onto my third car. The Merc had a hole in the petrol tank and the windscreen wiper motor had broken. As it was now over 20 years old my only chance was to aquire parts from a breakers. This proved fruitless and I reluctantly got rid of it and replaced it with a black 2L automatic vaxhaul omega. This was also very fast. I got 140mph out of it a few times. (M1 near Sheffield going to Meadow Hall. Good bit of road.) The problem was it was prone to cutting out when turning right. This nearly killed us in the path of busses and lorries a few times. So we got rid of that and ened up with a new (now old) shape mondeo. Silver, tinted windows, non standard alloys, 2L automatic. 140mph of petrol gusling tatt that was in many ways like the old merc to drive. A two year old ford feeling like a twenty year old merc to drive just about summed it up. I deeply regret not keeping the merc. Even if I had bought another just like it for the spares for around £750 I would have still saved money in the long run. Sorry dad. You gave me your car and I drove it to death.

Not that my car concerns are at this point relevant.

They are not.

So it was the visit day and we nailed it to devon in the mondeo.

It was a well known route for us up to the bottom of telegraph hill, which is just past Exeter, as we came regularly on holiday.

But on this journey we would bare right on the A38 toward Plymouth. Scary stuff. I once drove from the A38 by the Morrisons store in Burton to the Sainbury's store at the Penn inn roundabout in Newton Abbot in 2 hours and 22 minutes. Crazy.

We reverted to our directions and the search began. Its amazing how many little villages are not far from Plymouth and close to the moors. The one we were looking for was quite near to a populated area called Plymton. It has a pub. A church. A school. A community hall and is not far from a zoo.

I loved this village from 100 metres up on my computer screen.

The actuality of driving through it for the fisrt time in reality did not disapoint. We knew we were gonna say yes the moment we pulled up out side the house. The family were as keen to leave as we were to move in. We both filled in the relevant forms and the date was set. The fear of something going wrong created a great tension at home for the next few weeks. We booked a removal company and sat tight. I had stopped working by this point and Helen was doing a spot of care work. You know the type of thing. Going from house to house wiping arses and cleaning up



sick. It kept her mind off the move and gave me chance to pack everything Up. As the time neared we began to tell a few people what we were about to do. We had kept it under our hats just in case it fell through. People were mostly pleased but I found it quite irritating when people kept asking me what I was going to do when we had moved.

Do? Do? .....

What people needed to understand was that I felt I had done quite enough already. I was moving to Devon to do a little as possible.

That's not me letting my family down. Helen was with me all the way. It was time to get back to basics and live the good life.

I don't mean like Richard Bryers and Felicity Kendall or more recently Hugh Fernly Wittingstal. I mean just taking it steady and watching Jeremy Kyle and popping out for a spot of lunch, having a walk round town then having a pint at the local before picking up Chloe and Harry from school. I had it all planned. My rock and roll lifestyle of years gone by, coupled with the stress and strain of depression and bankruptcy, plus the years of not sleeping properly working shifts had left me with a number of ailments that I felt sufficiently justified early retirement.

There was no escaping the almost perfect yet unlikely chain of events that lead me to this monumental moment in my life. I really was going home after all these years out in the wilderness. I was tired of factories and lorries. I'd had enough of hooded bag

heads roaming the estates, loose lipped families gossiping about my every move and word. I couldn't bare the futility of an existence in which I just wasn't happy. Our holidays and my constant references had tuned Helen into my way of thinking. Moving to Devon meant the world to us.

Here we were, mortgage free, other debt free, removal van booked and a home waiting for us. There was no turning back. No looking back.. Not even in anger. We were leaving our old lives behind us and starting again. How many people dream of such a thing? Most I think, and we were doing it. Prior to meeting Helen I had moved around quite a bit. We ourselves had moved a few times but it was confined to Burton itself. This was a different ball game. A multitude of things could go wrong..... But it didn't. Our entire life was packed into a lorry and off it went. Chloe, Harry, Thomas, Helen, Me and our two black cats (sisters Molly and Muffin) piled into our car and our journey began. Our old cat from Short street, Trouble had been stolen prior us moving to Winshill.

The previous owners who left her behind had moved to Reading, but it hadn't worked out so they came back to Burton.

Days after this piece of information came our way Trouble vanished. In the four years that we had lived in that house Trouble had gone from the cat that was left behind to being a much loved member of the family. She had eased the pain of Thomas and

Muffins demise at the hands of Winhill smack heads. Our Drug dealer paranoid schitzofrenic neighbour took pity and gave us his cat to replace Trouble. He gave us a big fat Tabby called Molly. He owed us a good turn as he had thrown a bicycle through our downstairs bathroom window during a session of violence toward his 15 year old girlfriend. It occurred to me I hadn't seen this cat before and knew it may have been a tad fishy. I took her to the vet to get checked out. He scanned it for a chip and it turned out she had been stolen from a garden 3 miles from our street. We only had her for 2 weeks but once more we were catless and heartbroken. Thomas, Muffin, Trouble and Molly. All gone. Once in our housing association property on Delhi close in Winhill(up with the down and outs as my mum put it)Helen wanted to try again and get our fifth cat.She went to see her friend Donna who's cat had just had a massive litter.It was a mixed bag of varying shapes, sizes and colours. Amongst the kittens were two tiny black ones. As a tribute to our previous cats we named them after our old ex pets. So out of 6 cats we have had 2 mollys and 2 muffins. We didn't name our son Thomas after our murdered cat Thomas. That would be silly. It was a pure coincidence .

So there we were, our little family going to sunny Devon.

Guess what? As we past Bristol and entered the south west the sun shone bright and life felt good.

Life didn't feel so good at 5.20pm as the removal van

pulled away leaving us in our new home up to our necks in boxes and mayhem.

We worked long and hard into the night sorting out our stuff. This had been a long time coming and I felt slightly emotional

and exhausted. I couldn't sleep at first as my mind was a blur with a thousand crazy thoughts. When I finally dropped off I had a nightmare that I was in a factory on a night shift working to pay off debts I could never pay off and living in a town I didn't like that I could never afford to leave. Next morning I awoke in a panic and disorientated. I took a few moments to get my bearings. I was in Devon in my new house and all was well.

I had set the TV up for the kids and got a few toys to keep them quiet. Helen and I continued where we had left off the night before. We ran out of steam about lunchtime so we stopped and went into the city to have a look around. Plymouth seemed to have undergone a complete re vamp since I had last visited. It was great. We had a lovely afternoon checking out the shops and the hoe and the barbican. We never had any doubts about the village, but Plymouth was a grey area. Our concern was blown away as our expectations were exceeded. This truely was an amazing day. As day became early evening we headed home and picked up a Chinese from nearby town Plymton. Now I must pick my words carefully because in this absurdly politically correct era I could well find some pen pushing white guy

with too much time on their hands accusing me of being a racist. This is a food issue. Not an immigration issue. Burton on Trent is a very multicultural town. (Pakistanis, Indians, afro Caribbean's, Greeks, Turkish and more recently a load of Polish). Ultimately this means a vast array of ethnic food is available 24/7 in Burton and most of it is of a high standard in both taste and portion quantity.

There aren't many Mosques in Plymouth. Not a great deal of Temples either, plus I have yet to find the local front line.

The point I am trying to make is that the take away was a world away from what we were used to. The word dreadful springs to mind. You can't get good ethnic food easily in South Devon. That's not to say it isn't here. We just need to put out the feelers and source it. This would be our only midland 'miss that' moment. After our poor tea we set off to see my old pal Neil. It was his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party. When we first met all those years ago he was just 18. Where had this time gone? So many years. Wasted years in some ways. The potential and the talent. The charisma and the charm. It still hurts to think how we let it slip. But hey, that's rock and roll. Our task was to find a pub in a village called Kentisbeare. To cut a long story short I couldn't find it. I got lost. It was late and I was tired. I was still in shock at our move. We couldn't even ring them due to the fact that Thomas had thrown my K800i away 2 days earlier in Burton. This phone was ace. It was like the one

Daniel Craig used in Casino Royale, only it wasn't silver. I have however recently acquired a silver one...nice. I had failed to attend Neil's party. If I had a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party I would want Neil to show up. We got home at 11pm and had clocked 120 miles. What a shambles. Neil would go on to reassure me it didn't matter.. But it did. It still does.

We spent the next week getting the house in a comfortable state to live in. Chloe and Harry started school and things began to fall into place. I lived in Devon with my family.

#### AND THE POINT?

Music has played a large part in my life but as with most people, as I became more embroiled with my new life as dad, I not only forgot about my desire to be a musician, but I nearly forgot the very roots of my own sense of purpose. The very reason I am who I am was fading. The only remaining evidence was a constant feeling of not being full filled. With my wife and three children and my new Devon life I should have been complete. But I wasn't.

A part of me was missing. A lost piece of jigsaw. For the life of me I just couldn't put my finger on it.

Then came the call. Birmingham Andrew who was once Torquay Andrew, but who was nothing to do with Bristol Andrew, had some news for me.

He had got two tickets to a gig. One for me and one for him.

We were going to see a band play a gig at the Brixton

Academy.

Not just any band. We were going to see the most important band in the history of rock and roll, the band that shaped the culture and identity of a generation, the band who for 30 years had meant more to me than any other. The reason I tick how I do. The reason I think how I think. They had played before but it passed me by and it wasn't my time. But it was now. It was my time and my turn to see the greatest thing since sliced bread... Sex Pistols. It would be Friday November 9<sup>th</sup> 2007. Jesus that was weeks away. All of a sudden time stood still and each minute lasted an hour. Each hour a day and each day a week. The sheer anticipation of this event left me feeling quite ill.

It was to be an over night event. Apart from the night shifts when I was working, Helen and I hadn't really spent a night apart like this. She recognised the scale and importance of the gig and backed me all the way. As you can imagine the time leading up to the gig was hell for me. I booked my train tickets in advance to save money. We filled our time having nice walks and doing lunch. Burton rarely crossed our minds except for immediate family issues.

Up in Birmingham Andrew was going through a similar period of anguish as he prepared mentally for the show.

My only concern was that I was overly keen and eager while also expecting too much....what if they weren't any good? What If I was let down. After

everything I had done and seen in my crazy life anything less than 'sensational' would mean it had all been for nothing. My existence would be pointless. The world is full of pointless things. I really didn't want to be one of them. What I wanted was a fitting and worthy climax to the 30 years that had just raced past me.

I swear, as I have just sat here and recounted some key moments from those thirty years, it truly feels as if the time spent writing it down is the time that it took. The clock is ticking. Every second counts. My wife matters, the children matter, living in a very nice part of this once but no longer great country matters, but there must be something else just to put the icing on the top of my big chocolate cake. In my heart that icing would be seeing the pistols in the cozy confines of an intimate venue in the heart of London.

Sex Pistols, a true London product on a true London stage.

## D-DAY

As I waved cheerio to my family at Plymouth station and went to board my train my stomach was in knots. I was to go from Paddington, which was my destination to meet Andrew at Euston, which was his. We would then go to our Hotel in Vauxhall to get changed before then going to have some drinks with his brother in a pub near Waterloo station, not far from the itv London studios on the south bank. Then we would go back to the hotel and get ready for the



gig and make our way to Brixton. That was the plan. It was a tight schedule but Andrew likes to put pressure on himself to maximize the chances of something going wrong in order to keep life interesting.

The train journey was great. It had been years since I had done a big train trip like this and I had forgotten what an exciting and fun way it was to travel. Jimmy Saville was right. This is the age of the train. All of the people getting on and off. Why were they using the train today? Funerals? Weddings? Holidays? Business trip?

Who knows, maybe somebody was like me going to see the pistols that night? A Morrissey lyric sprang to mind from a track off the amazing LP Meat is Murder. Nowhere fast was the song. "and when a train goes by its such a sad sound..no its such a sad thing"

I always liked and understood this lyric. It goes well with a part of Cemetery Gates from the LP The Queen is Dead. "all those people all those lives where are they now.. With loves and hates and passions just like mine."

They kind of summed up how I felt about this journey. The train wasn't just carrying passengers, it was carrying the emotions and the hopes and fears of hundreds of people and as each moment passed by, the train itself was passing by houses, and maybe in one of those houses somebody was thinking about where and why the people were going to on the train

they could hear rumble in the background. That's what London does to you. Even just travelling there. It makes you think. By the time I stepped off the train I was in full London mode. The smell of London hit me as I walked along the platform. It's the smell of excitement. The buzz in my belly increased and I couldn't stop myself from smiling.

I knew it would be a good day when within seconds a guy came up to me and gave me his travel card. "I'm done with this" he said. Amazing. I'd saved a fiver straight off.

I jumped on the tube and headed for my rendezvous. We made contact by mobile phone and he guided me to him through the crowds to his position by Burger king. I walked past as a joke.

He wasn't amused. We fed off each other and fuelled our infantile excitement for what lay ahead. We got lost on the tube, lost in the street and felt like we had lost our minds. But overall as with the drum kit theft over twenty years before, Andrew's plan for our afternoon went quite well and we made it to the pub on time. It was good to see his brother. We hadn't met for about 14 years. He lives and works in London. We drank and chatted and bid farewell an hour or so later.

Back at the Hotel we had more drinks and put on our gig clothes. Jeans and T shirt was fine. We then went to Brixton for more drinks.

SEX PISTOLS WILL PLAY (THIS TIME FOR

REAL,BRIXTON WAS A GAS)

Brixton was electric as three and a half thousand Pistol fans rammed into all the pubs.

The relative calm that had come over us when with Andrew's brother had long since gone. Colin was younger than us, only by a couple of years, but looking at him it could have been ten. Me and Andrew looked like fat old men ravished by years of hard living.

He seemed more together and in control than either of us did.

It was strange. I felt old and immature at the same time. He brought us back down to earth and steadied the ship. It did need steadying and we both appreciated his input to our day, but once he had gone and we hit the pubs near the academy we went mad again. It was almost unreal. I felt like I was in a dream. I was surrounded by other slightly overweight men guzzling pints and talking about the old days. I have seldom been exposed to such an atmosphere. Andrew was also soaking it all in.

What an amazing time this was. What an amazing turn of events.

Who'd have thought that this could be happening to me. Mind you, you could say that about anything or anyone. Look at Dave Lee Travis when he had a slot on radio one. He had a section of the show where two teams played a general knowledge quiz over the phone based on a round of darts. Darts on the radio! Who'd have thought of that? So here I was in my

own game of darts on my own radio of life. It was time to go to the venue.

Andrew was possibly the first person I spoke to when I began school in Torquay. Our friendship had spanned 30 years. It seemed fitting that this night be shared with him. He loved the Pistols nearly as much as me. He was the first person I had played guitar in front of. We walked to the Brixton Academy and joined the queue. The gigs I have seen over the years is endless. Surprising as well. I took Helen to see Tina Turner at Wembley before they pulled it down, Gabrielle at the N.E.C on her greatest hits tour. Festivals, raves, big clubs.. All sorts, but I had never been in a queue this pumped up and ready. Brixton was set to explode. Not with violence and anger but pure joy. That's what gets lost in the mists of time. The Sex Pistols were a fun band. They had things to say and when attacked they took no prisoners, but when left alone to do what they wanted to do they were a hard gigging band who loved to play their songs and for people to enjoy themselves. People don't often get to properly enjoy themselves much anymore. I wanted to enjoy myself on this night out and I was getting closer to my target. A friendship 30 years in the making and a gig 30 years in the making. We handed over our tickets and got searched. Then we went through the doors to the merchandise and burger area. We stuffed our faces with cheeseburgers and looked at the T-shirts. We didn't buy one. A tad pricey to be honest. An excited fan began an

impromptu conversation with me about his love of the pistols. I nodded in agreement as he pointed out the importance of the night. He had been the night before, he was at Finsbury Park and the Phoenix Festival in the 90's. He also claimed to be at the Sheppard's Bush Empire gig a few years earlier. Was he more of a fan than me? I don't think so. I'm glad this was my first Pistols gig. We walked off and got a drink and went into the main area. It was packed and noisy. A pointless guitar band had just finished a dreadful set of yawn and a DJ began thumping out a mediocre mix of mashed potato. Look, let's be honest here, Bono and the edge with Jesus on drums could have come on and played one of my and Neil's old Lessons In Hate songs and I wouldn't have been impressed or batted an eye. The fact of the matter is only The Sex Pistols would do. We kept drinking and kept waiting. My heart was pounding like never before and the knot in my stomach grew tighter.

The strange thing is that on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1976 the Sex Pistols played a gig at the 76 club in Burton on Trent. That's 31 years ago. I was living in Burton at the time. My family

hairdresser was Peter Graham. His barber shop was on the same stretch of shops that the 76 club was above. I had been ill with a chest infection so I hadn't been to school that week. As I was on the road to recovery my mum had taken me into town for 'a good trim'. Had we walked past the band taking their amps in through the chip shop beneath? ( any

band will tell you this strange access for live bands to this once famous Burton night spot). My life always intertwined with the sex pistols. This truly was my destiny. I had not long escaped that town and yet looking back it was part of me. My time had come.

A tension filled the air and the crowd went berserk as Vera Lynne Singing There will always be an England began playing.

“This is it” grinned Andrew.

He was right. This really was it.

From the rear of the stage the four Sex Pistols emerged to the most rousing reception you could imagine. We had a good viewing position to the left and slightly back from the mixing desk. I couldn't contain myself and I went nuts.

From here on in it really didn't matter that I had attended this event with Andrew. I was transfixed. Totally mesmerised by the vision before me. John said a few words about being worthy and said hello to London. The next thing you know Steve was playing the opening to Pretty Vacant. It sounded incredible. The Brixton Academy isn't know for its great acoustics but for what the Pistols were putting out it sounded pretty damn good to me. Johns voice sounded incredible. Ive seen teenagers with less energy. These men are in their 50's for gods sake. The power and charisma that oozed from that stage overwhelmed me. It isn't just the Jonny Rotten show either. Oh no. These men are a unit. Granted John does have a hint of musical genius about him. You

cant listen to the PIL back catalogue without realising something special was going on. But Public Image Ltd was not the pistols. When John played sex pistol songs live in concert with PIL it didn't feel like this. It didn't sound like this. Not many people are in two ground breaking bands. Paul Mcartney was in the Beatles and Wings, plus Dave Grohl was in Nirvana and The Foo Fighters, but none of that compares to John and his achievements. But Within the pistols he is an equal with the others. The chiefs of relief were rubbish Paul, what were you doing? And Steve... man I swear I saw you a year or so ago and you looked like Steve Coogan as Tommy Saxondale.

And Glenn... Glenn... poor Glenn. With justice, dignity and the truth.... The Rich Kids were doomed. But here, together, tonight, just for me, you are the sex pistols and I am re-born. There is no swindle.. Just rock and roll. The rest of the audience along with Andrew just seemed to disappear and the whole thing became very personal to me. Its as if by just watching, listening and understanding the Sex Pistols that I somehow was becoming an honouree member of a very exclusive club. I cant be alone in feeling this as for over 30 years now I have read review and interview with all and sundry saying how the sex pistols changed their lives. And here I stood and it was happening to me. The expression 'anyone can be a sex pistol' sprang to mind.

Standing in the Brixton Academy that night I was a

Sex Pistol.

John was singing and looking right at me. I could attach my own personal take on his words and interpret them as being about me and my life. Steve was showing me what it really means to be a guitar hero. Paul and Glenn kept it so tight you couldn't breathe.

I was speechless. Pretty Vacant, seventeen, no feelings and New York rocked me to my boots. Midway through Did You Do Me Wrong I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was Andrew. He yelled into my ear. "This is almost unbelievable, I've never seen anything like it....." for a split second I had an awful feeling he was seeing and hearing something different to me and was about to level a criticism, as he often does with most things. He finished his sentence. "this is the best gig I have ever seen!"

I smiled at him... "yes.. I know" I replied.

The hits continued. Liar, Holidays in the Sun, Submission, Stepping Stone, No Fun, Problems and God Save the Queen.

The first encore was EMI and Anarchy in the UK. The second and sadly last encore was Bodies.

I almost cried at the end. I could happily have watched it all again. A truly marvellous show that blew my mind. By the look on Andrew's face and many other of the people leaving the venue I was not alone in my sense of joy and sadness. We staggered to the tube in a slightly subdued mood. I had built



myself up for this gig to the point where disappointment was on the cards. But in actual fact this gig had exceeded my expectations. It had been too good. Because of this fact I was so deflated that far from being the icing on my chocolate cake, it was another layer of fudge for me to chew on over and over in my head. Me and Andrew went to the Hotel and took a load of drugs to console ourselves at what was now feeling like a great loss. We popped out to a pub to have more drinks. We chatted about the awesome spectacle we had just witnessed and how we were feeling about it being over. We got about half way through the pints then had to stop and beat a hasty retreat to the Hotel. The selection of drugs including cocaine and ecstasy began to take its toll. We munched, smoked, snorted and drank our way through various substances until the early hours.

The next morning we went our separate ways. I was elated and melancholy at the same time.

I had a wander round the city for a couple of hours before heading to catch my train. I was sad to have left Andrew. I was sad to be leaving London, and I was sad to be leaving The Sex Pistols. They had two more shows to do at the Brixton Academy and I was desperate to go again. But that was impossible. Looking out of the window as the train made its way through the suburbs of this great city I felt more empty than I had in years. I wanted to cry.

What I needed more than anything was to see my wife and children and have a big family hug. But

even that wasn't going to be easy. Network rail was doing essential line work and I had to get off the train and get on a stupid bus at Tiverton. I hate long bus journeys and I felt sick as a dog. God I just wanted to be home with Helen and the kids. A gloating text from Andrew explaining how he was at home lay on his settee reading the paper while his girlfriend was fixing him some food in the kitchen just rubbed salt into my open wound.

The bus pulled into the train station car park and there was my little family and my silver ford mondeo. A warm glow filled my heart. Nice.

## PROBLEMS

But I now have a major problem. Lets re cap.

I here the pistols in 1977 and I am inspired to become a musical genius hailed around the globe.

I embark on this journey with my mate Neil.

After a great start we strangely fizzle out.

I move around quite allot feeling a bit lost for a few years moaing about how I could have been someone.

I do a load of drink and drugs.

I meet Helen and start a family and get a mortgage. I forget about being an inspirational genius.

We blow allot of cash and live life to the full with our 3 kids.

It catches up with us and I sell my house and go bankrupt.

I stop working and we move to Devon to take it easy for a while.

I have an itch I cant scatch.

I go to see The Sex Pistols play a gig. I think this will quench my thirst but it doesn't. Far from it. It actually re-inspires me to make something of myself and achieve some kind of creative contribution to this planet.

The problem with this burning desire to 'be someone who has done something' is that I am nearly 40 years old. I am getting fat. I'm raising a young family and its hard and time consuming work and it doesn't leave much time to do anything.

The other key factor is the plain simple truth that may well have been staring me in the face for 30 years....

Maybe I'm not actually very good at anything.

SHOCKING

MAKING UP THE NUMBERS WITH THE ALSO RANS

You have to step back and take stock of situations

sometimes. It can't be a bad thing to just slow down, calm down, and think about what you are doing. In each of our individualities of humanity we should never forget that we are one out of six billion people. You can't have six billion artistic celebrity sport star actor musician authors who write for The Sun and host game shows.

It would not work at all if that were the case.

To have people who stand out as being in some way special you first have to have a generous amount of people who are just Normal, Bland, Boring, Content, Humble, Passive and without free thought.

This majority of the population will fill its time either fighting pointless wars, going to work, having children, buying furniture, taking drugs, getting drunk, getting raped, raping people, going to church, blowing up people who go to church, robbing stuff, picking their noses or watching TV. Not only things like that, but also taking notice and buying into the products of the special ones.

It's a game. It's a con. It's a trap. It's whatever you want to call it. It's inevitable. Unless that is you have a talent that can set you aside from the majority and put you on the next rung of the ladder. I had always assumed it was my god given write to reach this rung and sit pretty. I have of course over time been taught a very harsh lesson. To assume anything makes an ASS out of you and ME. If you choose not to conform to the pecking order of the man made society trap, but can offer nothing of any merit to

help you escape from it, you will be frowned upon and despised by the weak willed and the stupid. We are no longer allowed to experience a free existence and feel the inner satisfaction of soaking in all the good things about being human. Instead we work ourselves to death paying bills and taxes.

That next rung does take people like me out of the gutter and helps the individual to buy into these moments of humanity.

I want to slowly travel the world and swim with dolphins. I want a weekend apartment in London and go to shows. I want to have a fancy Kitchen but never use it because I always eat out. I want to review the papers on sky news and be a guest on Question time. I want to sit a table away from John Lydon and his crew at some club and send him a bottle over and for him to say "thanks, I'll call you next week". I want my wife to be able to blow a grand on rubbish and for it not to matter. I want my kids to go to the best schools and have a swimming pool. I want to get together in my home built recording studio with Neil and put out some stuff on our own label once in while. I swear I truly believed for so long that that's the kind of way my life would pan out.

Not once did it occur to me that there was a very good reason it hadn't. The fact may be that I am not a musical genius at all. My lyrics may have been as stupid as rhyming two, you, and stew with poo. My poems may have been as childish as cane, Spain, pain and then brain. As for my guitar playing..well you

know what? I just may have been the worst guitar player in the world. That's why I bit it during a gig at The Parrot all those years ago. I couldn't play it so I bit it. What about my celebrity charisma ? That's a joke. I am as charismatic as a bag of chips without salt and vinegar. There is no way onto that rung for me now. Not unless I win the lottery and buy my way onto it that way. What are the chances of that? It's pensioners that leave it to their dogs that win that these days. I will never contribute anything to this planet and I will never be rich beyond my wildest dreams. My poor children will have to get jobs and fall into the trap that Helen and I did. The sad thing is that this information and these facts and this brief history is all in my head. What you have just read is playing in my head on some kind of sick loop. It's a terrible thing to live with....

.... Failure. I am a modern day Frank Spencer. I have failed.

I am a let down.

This must be true because when I worked at the car factory they held many sponsored events to raise money for a well known charity. In good faith I sponsored some people to do a big walk up some major hills. I then discovered something that is true and shocking. This charity gives money to a thing called the d--e foundation. They council child abusers. This may involve sexual abuse and physical abuse. I and many of my colleagues didn't like this. I didn't want to pay for some nonce to have a cozy chat

on a leather sofa about why he fiddled with kids. I refused to pay. The next thing you know I am up to my neck with a tricky process called a die change when up walks this member of senior management and he takes me to one side. He tells me that by not paying I had let my work mates down, I had let my family down, I had let the company and the charity down, I had let myself down and most importantly I had let the abused children down. If I hadn't been so busy I may have hurt this man. It wasn't long after this that I stopped going.

Looking back he may have been write. Then again he may have been wrong. Who knows. Either way I hope he becomes ill.

## MORE EDUCATION

Of course I admit that there may be a complete and easy answer to all of this. This can be traced back to a key moment in the 1980's.

You may recall Andrew taking a step back from the music scene due to educational reasons. This in turn was followed some years later by Neil and his A levels and subsequent B.A Honouree Degree.

Qualifications can help people have rewarding careers. Many people work hard and earn lots of money and enjoy the fine things in life.

But a piece of paper proving that you can absorb information like a sponge and re hash it in your own words like a word order altering machine doesn't always mean you have a clear head that can see the

trap you may be about to fall into. Also, in some people the road to academic enlightenment actually leads them into understanding the bigger scheme of things and to withdraw from the gravy train of oppression. When I think of such intelligence I often find myself picturing my cousin Tim in my head. Without doubt one of the most intelligent and well educated people alive today. His forward thinking 'expansive rugby' take on life lead him full circle over a period of study spanning over a decade. From a working class Marxist to a disillusioned philosopher via Degree and PhD, Tim found all he once loved was all he now hated. The politics that once absorbed him now sicken him.

By exploring how the world is run he is more aware than most what a mill stone of pain and unfair suffering it truly is.

So what should he do? Use the letters after his name to walk into some paper pushing easy job with an obscene wage? Lecture at a University about books and adhere to a curriculum guideline he doesn't believe in? Write a book putting forth his own beliefs on the tyranny and the wars created behind the closed doors of The White House and Downing Street designed to turn men against their brothers? Or more simply just block it all out to save his own sanity and aim low in order to avoid disappointment down the line? I have on many occasion got completely smashed with Tim and enjoyed long late night chats about such matters. I once turned up after



taking 20 antidepressants and drinking 2 bottles of red wine. I had some marijuana on me. I have no memory of the evening but I felt very ill the next day so it must have been fun.

The point I am making is this.. If a life of reading and education has left some body like Tim feeling the same as I feel now then I didn't miss any boat. I wasn't born to be a county councillor or a high flying executive. I am, like my cousin Tim, way to clever to be drawn into such hypocritical sludge sucking circles.

No way. People like us keep it honest, keep it real and keep it clean. Bearing all this in mind it leads me to a shattering conclusion .It is an uncomfortable answer to a question I keep asking myself. If I am not a rich, famous , and respected musician, If I am not a special gifted person sent to change the world and I am not a well paid city slicker , then tell me, please somebody tell me... Why am I here?

To pro create? Yes I have sired three great children and I have given them the gift of life. Im sure when I die they will be sad for a while. I don't think I am a very good dad so they wont be devastated for all eternity. I wont get mentioned on the news like the major players. Siring offspring isn't a worthy enough contribution to warrant global acknowledgment. Maybe it should be? Perhaps there should be a death channel 24 hours a day and on it all recorded deaths would be announced by the presenter and a small paragraph on the deceased would be read

out. Wow that would be great. From kids with cancer to L.A drive by victims. Sleeping heart failure to building site accident men. Car crash mothers to terrorist bomb blast fathers. Motorbike youths and grand parent strokes. Every one should get a mention and a paragraph, accompanied by a picture. Not just Heath Ledger Lady Di and Elvis Presley. Man, I could even be one of the presenters. “Welcome to channel death.” wow. That would be great. It would never run out of material and we would probably need more than one channel and a version for each continent . If you lived you are special and deserve a mention on channel death. But channel death doesn't and wont exist. The fact is that the answer to my question is the same as it is for the majority of the people on this awfull planet.

I am here to make up the numbers with the also rans, while the fat cat winners consume the very heart of everything that is good and pure and there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. Its been a tough course but I think I may have passed.

I so clearly see the truth now. I have learned my Lessons in hate very well. ....

**NOW WHAT?**

Well I have to be careful not to let my hatred and bitterness overpower me and so consume me. I must also ignore that I am rubbish at everything so I don't get to depressed about it. I must try to turn a

blind eye to the evil lies we are fed and the injustices of societies trap. Maybe I should aim low to avoid further disappointment down the line. 150mg of Venlafaxine a day can only do so much. The rest must come from within me.

Sounds simple doesn't it? But its not. Its not simple at all.

We do live in a world full of paedophiles and rapists. People are getting stabbed in the belly each day. George Bush and Tony Blair have caused wave of hate and terror that affects us all. I do live in one of the most expensive countries in the world to live, and it is supposed to prosperous and free, yet people are living in squalor and poverty. Men are getting kicked to death by young kids in the street while defending their property. Children are not being taught how to read and write properly and nobody has any respect anymore. 11 years of a labour government has brought this country to its knees.

Add this to my own personal predicament, (talent less, lazy, inspired but out of ideas, boring and aging fast) and you can understand my turmoil. So I shall keep taking the tablets and try to relax.

Just imagine how this would have hit me without Helen and the kids to keep me going. I may still be moving from town to town looking for something that doesn't exist. At least here in my countryside retreat we are well away from much of the madness.

I can and will get through this. Well that's what my psychiatrist keeps telling me anyway. "Be positive"

She says, dangling her suede court shoe from her nylon clad toes as she reaches down and scratches the exposed arch of her foot with her long red Nail. Positive? Oh yeah... I can do positive...

I have returned to Devon almost exactly 30 years since first doing so as a child. I saw the Sex Pistols play live almost exactly 30 years since first hearing them. 30 years.. I couldn't bare to waste another 30 years. I must be positive.. Not HIV positive I hope.

100 or so pages ago I described Devon as the greatest place I have been and that moving to it is where my life truly began.

What I must do is rediscover that spark I had all those years ago and rise from the ashes of my utter failure to show all those critics and detractors that I do have what it takes to be a success purely by being myself. It's the second chance some people never get.

My fight back has already began in many ways.

The boy who once told me to walk behind him on the way home from school so I didn't stop him from looking cool is now a permanent nights taxi driver. A real life Travis Bickel.

A drug crazed skin head who attacked me and a mate in a grave yard because he thought he had sat in our urine on a grave went on to die jumping from a building on lsd. ( yes, you did sit in our urine...ha ha )The bike thieving smack head is also dead. Bodyline cosmetics went bust and shut down. The Parrot ( plugs pulled by landlord as I bit my guitar to

a wall of feedback and violence)...demolished for a block of flats.

I mean I could go on but it would be pointless, if not fun for me to rub salt into open wounds... The thing is its not just me.. Nobody I know or have ever known has gone on to achieve anything either. They have done as little and in some cases turned out worse than I.

I am happily married and I do have 3 great children. I lead a life of leisure in a beautiful part of the country. I have a big fast car and a massive television. The slate is wiped clean. I have not fallen behind. I am on an even keel with my peers. I am ready willing and able.... I just don't know what for.

In the grand scheme of things regarding this planet am I a no mark and a loser? .. Yes.

Can and will I ever be able to accept that fact ?.. No.

I am no also ran. I am not even at the race track yet. My race has not yet been run. The last 30 years were merely a dry run to prepar me for the next. I can be anything I want. I can do whatever I want to do. If anybody gets in my way I shall run them down and leave them dead in a gutter. I will dig out my old roadstar and restore it. I will take this pain and run it through my fingers and down the strings. They say life begins at forty. I am nearly there.. Bring it on. I cant wait. So I am getting fat? I will eat less and do sit ups. So my liver hurts in the morning? I will change whisky for water. So I lost my faith in

humanity? I will pray to the spirits of love to restore it. So I feel sad sometimes? I will watch more Alan Partridge and Victor Meldrew. Yaz said it all.. The only way is up. Which in turn triggers another memory of being very drunk with Neil in the August of 1988. Swilling pints downstairs at the castle trying to speak as that song blasted out as sweaty people danced. A memory soon to be twenty years old. My god its endless. Oh yeah.. Neil.. Of course .. We can reform the band and give it a last blast. The sun is out the sky is blue there isn't a limit to what I can do!! Ill be sitting in for John Gaunt in no time. Political debate on the radio on a Friday then headlining on the John Peel stage at Glastonbury on the Saturday. So what do you make of that Dr Shepard? Is that positive enough for you? Positive?...yes. Realistic?...no. So put your shoe back on and stop distracting me with your foot touching.

## OUT OF THE BLUE

I looked at the clock in my bedroom the other day. 11.11 am. Then strangely later that same day I saw it again. 11.11pm. Jesus. Paul bloody Fenlon out of the blue popped into my head.

I first met Paul in 1979. Like Andrew and myself he and his family were not native to Torquay. He was from Buxton. Paul clearly fancied himself from an early age. He wasn't in my class. I was in Mr Dennis's class at Cockington county primary school. He was in Mr Bowker's. Like me, Paul lived on

Bampfylde Road. His parents had a hotel. It was the age of Grease and Happy Days and in Paul's world he was Danny Zuko and Arthur Fonzerelli rolled into one 9 and a half year old super dude. Andrew and I were not impressed. Backed by a gang of meat heads Paul spent one break time roaming the playground asking people if they wanted a fight. A host of timid geeks said no and moved out of his way. Andrew and I became aware of the group of moron's coming our way. "it won't be me, I am sure he is afraid of me.. It will be you.. Stand strong. Be brave" said Andrew in my ear. Paul fronted me. "you want a scrap or are you a chicken?" he asked. I looked him up and down a bit. He had nothing. "Yeah... why not?". The blood and life drained from his face as the grim reality of what he had just got involved with hit home. The fight was arranged to take place on the field at the bottom of our street after school. My one request was that his flock of seagulls didn't attend. He agreed.

I didn't give it a second thought until I arrived at the field that afternoon. I had a rumble in my tummy and a dry mouth. No Paul. Just then I clocked Paul and about 5 other kids entering the top of the field via a gap in the hedge. He had broken the deal. 'sod this' I thought, and ran home. At about 5 pm Paul came to my door and said sorry the others had come before. He suggested we go and do the fight then. "where are you going?" said my mum. "I'm just popping to the field to have a fight with Paul Fenlon" I said casually.

“ok love, take care and be back by 6” .

We chatted nicely as we walked. Once at the field we both realised we had a problem. We liked each other. It was sunny as we sat on the grassy verge trying to figure out what to do.

Paul's plan was to tell everyone he had pummelled me senseless and left me for dead. I wasn't keen. I came up with the more fair idea that we punched each other to bits with no clear winner and stopped for medical reasons calling it a hard fought draw. He begrudgingly agreed.

This happened on a Friday. By the Monday at school our near death fight story was the talk of the play ground. People to this day still think our friendship was formed from bare knuckle respect. What nonsense, we never even threw a punch.

A few years later when we were teenagers we did find ourselves in a situation that did get a startling admission from Paul.

So, its early 1985 and Paul and I are at the swimming baths in plaimoor. ( by Torquay united's football stadium). We are splashing around having a laugh when BANG, this lad has swam right into me. He says sorry and goes away. A few moments later and BANG, blow me it's the same bloke and he has done it again.. Right into my belly. By this time I see his mates surrounding us and laughing. Paul also sniffs trouble. Our time was nearly up so we weren't loosing a great a deal by leaving early. We gave each other the nod and got out and went to get showered



and dressed.

The idiots were soon forgotten as we chatted in the shower about what to do after dinner. The next thing you know I feel a strange tap on my back. I turn around. It's the guy from the pool and he is spitting greenies at me. I asked him to stop and he said no and punched me. Me and Paul almost ran to our lockers and began getting dried and dressed. This was not easy for me as this guy and his mates were round us in a semi circle. I must have taken 4 or 5 more big shots to my head from this guy as I tried to blank out what was happening. He was spitting, swearing and pushing. Paul kept his head down and pulled on his dry clothes.

As we sat on the bench doing up our shoe laces both being verbally abused, and me being physically abused by these awful people who surrounded us, grown men and other lads walked by and did and said nothing to help us.

Then it struck me. The gang of cowards were still in their trunks.

The main attacker then went one kick to far. I let one go and caught him flush on the chin. I swear he must have been out cold almost instantly. It was a great punch thrown upward as I stood to my feet. He flew backward through his mates into a cubicle. I walked in and crouched over his limp boby and delivered about ten vicious right hands down into his swelling face. There was blood everywhere. His mates were motionless and speechless. Paul and I picked up our

stuff and began to leave.

“I saw all that.. Well done.. He deserved that” said a grown man.

“ You saw it all? So why didn’t you say something?” asked Paul.

The man blushed and realised what a coward he had been. We left. Once outside we ran for our lives to Paul’s house. Once dried and dressed the gang may have come looking to get revenge. “ You did well today” said Paul. “ If I’m honest with you I have to admit the way you took them punches and then battered that lad...I’m glad we never had that fight.. You were scary. I don’t think I would want to fight you.”

“no..no you wouldn’t.” I agreed.

Paul never asked me to walk behind so I didn’t embarrass him in front on foxy chicks after that. Not that I had many school walks left. It was just months after this I would be meeting Neil.

The sad thing about this story is that 22 years later people are still turning a blind eye and ignoring the yobs. How many kids have been stabbed this year? To many. But then again, if you do get involved it could be you who gets stabbed. As forty looms would I fancy doing three rounds with a gang of teenagers carrying guns and knives? No way. What is the government doing to stop these gangs? Not allot. Gordon Brown don’t care.

Jilted John by Jilted John was right.. Gordon is a moron.

But when he dies... Just like Blair, Bush, Botham and Madonna

It will make the news. Headline news. Fresh real news.

Will you make the headlines when you die? Are you worthy of a mention? Are you special? Did you change the world?

Or have you just got drunk, taken loads of drugs and talked bollox?

## EPILOGUE

I guess the whole birthday thing left an anti climax feel to my Devon homecoming, and as grown ups with new responsibilities Neil and I haven't been able to just pick up where we left off.

Engaged to the woman he now lives with, wedding planning is his Main focus. They have a nice flat in Torquay and he runs an antique shop in Newton Abbott .The amazing thing is that Claire is someone we met through being in a band together almost 18 years ago.They had remained friends for many years, until over a drink one day a penny dropped in both their heads. Having watched each other crash land with several failed relationships they both realised what had been missing from their respective lives.... Each other. This revelation and realisation took place just last year and the two soul mates knew they had found the one. Claire wasn't specifically a fan of our music. It was a friend of a friend type meeting. There would have been no way they would ever have met

without those early LID gigs. What a shame they didn't realise all those years ago they were a match made in heaven. They have 18 years of happiness catching up to do. What a great story. Neil may never have been a rock and roller without me to push him into it. That means without me he wouldn't now be getting married to his long lost love. Maybe it wasn't all in vane after all. Plymouth is about 40 minutes from Torquay so it isn't even as if it's short walk for a quick visit for either of us. For the first few months of my Devon life we had mainly been exchanging pleasantries by phone. Back in the day Neil and myself would regularly go to the cinema. So when Alien v Predator requiem was released early 2008 we both had light bulb moments. His Claire and my Helen would never want to see such drival. But sometimes a mindless pile of pap with death and destruction is what men like to see. Alien v Predator requiem contains strong language and scenes of violence from the outset, so It was something both Neil and I wanted to see. It made perfect sense for us to go together. We would go to see it

at the cinema on Abbey road. Back in the day it was an Odeon. It was next to The Falcon (remember... it was renamed The townhouse.) I drove across to see Neil and as I did I felt quite exited about being out and about on my own in Torquay with Neil. I called for him at 6.25pm .He ate a pizza for his tea and we walked down town. It must have been nearly 14 years since Neil and I had walked this route on our own on

a weeknight.

I suggested we pop to the townhouse ( ex falcon ) for a pint.

“ hey man, its been closed down for years!” I was shocked and saddened by this. We got to the pub and I looked at it all boarded up and in darkness. The memories of a thousand nights and ten thousand pints flashed through my mind. Me and Richard Hughes being punched to pieces by a rugby team and saved by a passing group of firemen. My cousin Geraint flooring me with a porley aimed joke kick that nailed me straight in the groin. Struggling to order a drink coming up on acid, extacy and mushrooms.(not at the same time I hasten to add). Staring at girls I could never speak to. Speaking to girls I couldn't look at. All gone forever. “It will be 23 years since we went for a drink in that building the first day we met” said Neil looking slightly wistful . “do you feel any different now to then?” I asked.

“mentally yes... but physically no. This could be 1985”

“I wish it was” I muttered.

The cinema was just how I remembered it. The merlin brand replaced the Odeon brand, but apart from that it was the same.

I think we were both having an amazing nostalgia attack.

I first came to this cinema with my sister to see Star Wars in the summer of 1977. It was while on the Devon section of the relative tour that took us to

Wales for Elvis's death. There is a big flight of steps that goes down the side of the cinema onto the main shopping street. We waited in a long line that went all the way down to the shops. It was a hot sunny day and I got sunburn on my neck. Who would have thought that day I would be here now. No queue tonight though. Neil and I were 2 out of a total of 8 people at this screening. The last time I was at a cinema this empty was amazingly at the first AvP movie. For the first ten minutes of that one I was the only person in there. That was at the Burton Cineworld multiplex a couple of years previously. I was joined by 2 lads who sat at the very back. Crazy. This subsequent film followed on where the first ended. We talked through much of it making humorous comments on the ropery plot, dodgy acting and senselessness of it all. That isn't to say we didn't enjoy it. Far from it. It was great. For the first time in a number of years it was like we were those two people again. Our next task on the road to back to kick starting our friendship was going for a couple of drinks in a pub. With the Townhouse gone the only option at this end of town was the Piazza. Another old haunt. "no.. you will cry.. Its un enterable for people like us now." Sighed Neil. We ended up in an Irish theme bar. I think it was called Sheymus O' flannagans or something like that. It was only ever going to be Kronenbourg . We got drinks and sat down. Me and Neil, in a pub, in Torquay , on our own and on a school night. We agreed it had been to

long and that psychologically it felt good. We chewed the fat about the old days. The good old days. Not there was or is anything wrong with nowadays. As Pete Shelly said “everybody’s happy nowadays” In 30 years im sure we will think back to this period as ‘good old days’ The chat in the pub after the film did confirm a few things. Neil also felt artistically incomplete and he felt he had under achieved. Nothing was set in stone but it is clear that after his wedding and honeymoon we need to have a good think about what we can do to fill that small gap and answer those questions we often ask ourselves... “if only...” and “what if...”

As we walked to his flat going back past the cinema I felt a great sadness wash over me. We were both quiet for a moment.

Once at his flat I had a bag of hula hoops to soak up the lager and bid my farewell. As I left I asked Neil the question that the answer to which terrified me most.

“Neil, did we, and have I , failed because I am rubbish at everything and could quite possibly be the worst guitarist ever?”

Neil placed a hand on my shoulder. “ Don’t you remember how you used to introduce yourself to people? Jesus man.. What a crazy question... you know the answer. Go home and stop fishing for compliments.”

The evening had been an outstanding success and I had a good if not slightly strange feeling about me.

Once home I poured and drank 2 tumblers full of 18 year old glenfiddich. Its just one of those drinks that always hit's the spot. I wouldn't usually be so aggressive in my consumption of such a fine brand. You cant beat a quality single malt of at least 12 years in age. As you may have picked up during this brief run through of some key moments from the last 30 years or so, I do like a good drink. But I don't get drunk like I used to. I just savour the flavour and enjoy the drink for its taste and warmth. Since settling with Helen and becoming a dad the drug side of things has gone out the window completely. I don't think that the heavy usage of LSD, marijuana, amphetamines, and ecstasy has affected me to much. It was something I used to do and just don't do now. I cant regret anything I have done because without those experiences I wouldn't be me. But I think I am one of the lucky ones. The bigger picture is that drugs cause harm and crime and I would be horrified if my children ever went near them. Even my beloved alcohol is clearly one of the most destructive drugs around. If it didn't exist and was invented next week it would be banned immediately. The human fascination with altering or enhancing our state of mind has been around since the dark ages. Its one of the many weaknesses that make us human. You can either grow out of it or get sucked into it. Tonight had been special. Sod it. I poured a third glass and drank it like water. My state of mind was well and truly getting altered.



One for the road and off to bed. That night I dreamed of ghosts, predators, zenomorphs , bars of soap , dead cats and guitars.

The next morning I dug out some old demos that Neil and I had done years earlier. Inspired by our night out I felt nostalgic so I wanted to check out those old sonic sounds. Mid way through one tape of rubbish I found a track I had forgotten about. It was mind blowing. It was a song called The Still Born Child Attacks. Musically it was heavy but also subtle, tuneful and yet repetitive. The production was low fi but utilised the technology of its time. Lyrically it went( and still does ) like this.

In the land of the living and the lonely ,  
Your not the only ... one I need.  
In the pigswill and in the sewer,  
We are becoming fewer.  
Far and wide , not often seen,  
Not very clean.  
We are gods amongst men.. Now and then.  
Into the dark.... I hear a dog bark.

I like that, and I wrote it. And It doesn't matter if nobody else likes it. As Freddie Mercury once said "nothing really matters". He was right. What matters is that the tape and that song exist. It cannot be denied. It is in itself, by its very existence ,a contribution. As I have mentioned a while back I

have got hours of this shit in boxes and bags in my loft. Wow. Had I got it all so very wrong? Had I missed a very big point? I think I have.

Lessons in Hate have never stopped. They have just been hidden away selfishly by me. With the story of my attempt to be somebody locked in my prison like brain, and the sounds we had made locked in my attic, I had in fact contributed to my own frustration and mental instability. This is the age of the CD burner, mp3 players and the download. Anyone can be anyone. I need to stop living in the past and get to the future.

What a fool I have been. We don't even need to write any new songs. The world is just a click away.

Its been a long time since I have met a new person and introduced myself as " the greatest guitarist alive on the planet at this time." But I really did used to say just that. I may just re start doing it. Not because I am mad, but because its true.

As I used to say to Neil all those years ago and as I say to Helen every Wednesday and Saterdag just before the Lottery Draw ,

" Ive got a good feeling about this."

Who knows what Tomorrow Brings? Nobody that's who.

I don't have a job but I enjoy my life of leisure in the heart of Devon and I have a very up to date games console. To cap it all I recently gave one of my guitars to my niece. Kind of like a modern day version of what happened on page 4 all those years

ago. Jesus! I've turned into my uncle Jack. That isn't so bad really. I always liked the guy. I've got some good memories of time spent with him and his family.

The sad thing about my uncle Jack memories are that at a big family 'do' last year I swilled a number of pints with him and recounted several of my favourite childhood memories that he played a major part in. (Elvis death, catching an eel and eating it, ghost stories, visiting castles in south Wales... etc.) My tales were greeted with a blank look and a shake of the head. He was 40 something when these things happened. Now 70 something those moments that were so important to me were lost in the mists of time for him. Memories, moments in time now gone forever.... My god. In its own way isn't life just so... so tragic.

So, what have I learned after all these so called 'lessons'? To be honest... not allot.... But Thomas has.... He pointed out of the lounge window last Monday morning. The bin men were doing there bi weekly pick up. That Delhi Close moment from last year must have popped into his now 3 year old brain. "Chitty!! Chitty man daddy!!" he shouted at me. Amazing. Bless him

Anyway, enough of my bollocks. Before I go I would like to thank The Sex Pistols for existing. Thanks also to John Peel and all of the bands he used to play for educating me musically, all of the people I have ever met for educating me socially and

thanks to all of the Andrews for the 'quiet nights in'  
and the 'big nights out'.

Thank you Neil, for being.... Neil.

Thank you to my wife Helen and my children  
Chloe, Harry and Thomas for being such a good  
family to be part of.

But lastly and most importantly of all I need to thank  
myself for accompanying me throughout this whole  
crazy time.

Oh.. and another thing.. Were my lyrics so bad?

I waited

But you never came

Where were you ?

Was it just the same?

We come from no where

Being dragged backwards

Through the door.

All hail

Something useful

Still wondering what its for

So show me

So show me.. The truth

The motorised youth

Hey, I know your face

I know your smell

I know you...

We are the motorised youth

We're searching for proof  
We don't need money  
We don't need emotion  
We don't need love and devotion.

The end.

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