

Eight Miles Higher

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Thursday, 19 March 2020

Band Interview: PARTY DAY



PARTY DAY: PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN GLASSHOUSES

PARTY DAY were a band from Wombwell, Barnsley.
I interviewed them twice, just as they were issuing their
highly-rated album 'Glasshouse' in 1985

Originally we were just post-war. Then we were post-Imperial, post-Industrial, post-Beatles, post-Punk, post-Marxist, post-Feminist, and even post-Modern – the general accumulative impression being that somewhere along the line we've missed out, we've come along too late, it's all happened. So what can a poor boy do except play in a Rock 'n' Roll band?

Among the glut of north-east England guitar-led bands-to-watch who successfully escape any

revivalist tags, yet synthesise various 1970s styles into an acceptably eighties melange – bands such as Leitmotif, Sinister Cleaners, or Cold Dance – Party Day are the ones most currently odds-on, the ones most rapidly emerging into the fast lane. A hint of Gothic drama, a touch of thrash-Punk energy, a modicum of Power-Pop tune-flair, all nailed down into a tight three-against-the-world bass-drums-lead format. Last year vocalist Martin Steele was advocating (to **'ZigZag'** magazine) a 'gradualist' policy to marketing Barnsley's finest, and thus far – from intensive gigging, through a series of home-made singles and compilation slots, they've built a following on that step-by-step principle. The next step – as they say, is... love! And their debut album **'Glasshouse'**, forms their most stunning statement to date. There's no polemics – people who live in 'glasshouses' shouldn't...!, there's no Leaders or state-of-the-nation's on the next big thing either. But what they do do, they do searingly well.

Live: against an aerosol-spray backdrop like a series of chromatic explosions, Martin – tall and blonde with hair shapelessly plumed, stands in owl-eye granny shades, swapping vocals for alternate numbers with slight dark pogoing bassist Carl Firth. Party Day are more bounce to the ounce than page three of the 'Scum', more fun to the tonne than your statistically regular Indie band – so fierce they blister the speakers. They remind you what grabbed you about guitar-based Rock in the first place, and they ram it home with lethal contagion. It's traditional instrumentation guillotined to a 1976 knife-edge. Appropriately the house p.a. rests on crates stencilled 'EXPLOSIVE CARTRIDGES', which seems to sum up their set.

Strange days indeed...

Apres la gig – or post-Gig, we're slouched around the one illuminated Common Room in the otherwise eerily dead Student's Union building, there's a partly-dazed Party Day – Martin, Carl, and drummer Michael Baker, coming down from the high-octane burn of gig adrenalin, a fanzine writer from **'Whippings And Apologies'** in sharp fifties quiff razored to a precision peak... and me.

I compliment the trio on the LP track "Athena", its sinuous guitar-build treated with found-tape (from a radio talking heads show with Robert Robinson?) documenting a 'pure DH Lawrence' story of a girl who becomes pregnant by the sun. Done live – bereft of such studio manipulation, the energy-levels are intimidating...

'Energy?' from Carl. 'We're right out of that now, we're knackered!'

'It's a fairly recent song' concurs Martin more seriously. 'But I can't for the life of me remember how we got it together. I write all the material, I tell him what to do on drums, and him what to do on bass.' Carl and Michael furiously shake their heads behind him. 'No' – back on the level, 'the writing's done by three people, we bounce ideas off each other. We throw a lot of songs away. We work loads of songs out, and we'll play one a couple of times and think 'no, that's not working,' and we won't do it again. But then we'll hit on something and we know THAT'S what we're going to be playing. It just falls into place.'

"Athena"? 'It's a deep song' adds Michael. 'But we've got more commercial songs than that.'

'You can't expect people listening to records, and buying records, to be naïve about what they wanna hear' argues Martin. 'They KNOW what they like. And yes, "Athena" is fairly complicated, but you can't put people down by thinking that that's not what they want. That probably IS what people want. They want music with something about it, not all this Disco stuff. Not that there's aught wrong with SOME Disco, there's some really good Disco records about, but having said that...'



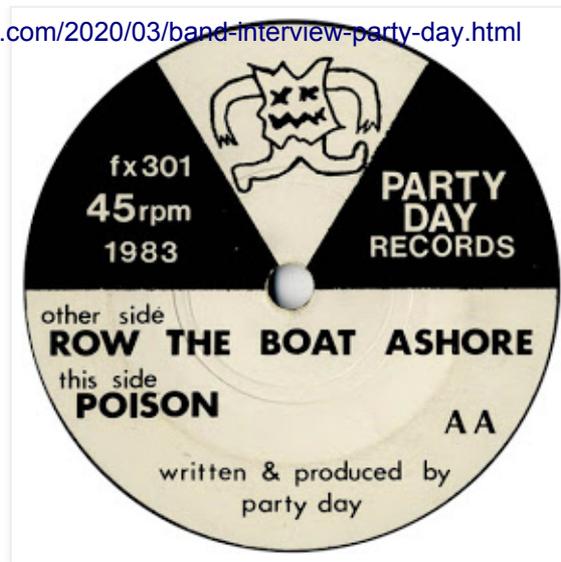
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Once the Party Day line-up firmed – unlike Danse Society who set up their stall in Sheffield, Party Day stuck around their native West Yorkshire post-Mining town of Barnsley to carve out a solid local reputation. They created venues – like the ‘White Heart’, where none previously existed. ‘They weren’t gonna put bands on, but we pestered them, and we became the first band to play there. Since then they’ve had a flood of bands.’

‘I thought I were going to be a Bobby (Policeman), but I didn’t grow enough. So I had to become a bass guitarist instead’ travelogues Carl. ‘We began with another guitarist (Gregory Firth) who used to do the major part of the work, with Martin just filling in on guitar.’

‘But when he quit I was left to do ALL the guitar AND vocals, which is... well, I just thought, I’m sick of this singing lark – ‘cos I’m basically introvert,’ again, Martin’s laconic Party Day humour. But whatever the motivation, vocals are now effectively split down the centre, the two voices pitched against each other, adding contrast and power, a technique used to breath-catching effect on album cuts “Firehorse” and “Atoms”.

Party Day are ‘the bastard child’ of an early grouping known as Further Experiments, who ‘after nine months, denounced their original path to success,’ leaving only a five-track tape to mark their passing (*‘...More Fun In Colour’*). The transition occurred in May 1981, ‘basically we just took the name ‘Party Day’ from a song’ explains Carl. The first evidence of Party Day’s presence came on a brace of cassettes – early material, such as the percussive “Them” laced with synths, but the distinctive structural sound already established, a long instrumental drive-in, often working up from solitary bass figures, gathering momentum, power, and intensity towards the vocals which, mixed back and faintly echoed, are cleanly separated and word-perfect. Early live material includes “Washing Line” and “Springboard”, “Bleed Me” and “Sisters”, as well as “Rabbit Pie” – a song allegedly based lyrically on the wartime favourite ‘Run Rabbit Run’ – ‘so don’t let your life stand still/ or you too could end up in a rabbit pie.’



Post-cassette, the fast-paced single “Row The Boat Ashore” – plus their meaty beaty big and brash contribution to the Leeds-based *‘Giraffe In Flames’* compilation, extended that base, up to and including the launch of their debut album. While the only classic Party Day song NOT included on the LP is – oddly enough, the title song! But they’re saving the visionary-anthem “Glasshouse” for a soon-come twelve-inch single courtesy Rouska Records, which will emerge post-album.

So what’s the next step? A support spot on a national tour?

‘Thing is’ explains Martin, ‘if you want to support a major band you send off a demo tape. They hear our tape and they think ‘no way, we’re not having them in, ‘cos they’d blow us off-stage!’ So we never get to support any major bands. No, we’ve played with Attila The Stockbroker, we played support to the Cult in Leeds, and with Danse Society once at Sheffield’s ‘Marples’. I was really impressed with them that night. Other big names we’ve been associated with include Newtown Neurotics. But I doubt if we’ll ever get to the stage of supporting a really major band because it depends a lot who that band is. I mean – XTC used to be big, we’d have done well supporting them. We’d have banged down the XTC crowd. They’d have liked us. But all this pretentious Sex Gang Children rubbish, they’re just after the image side of it. The skull and cross-bones side of it...’

So why the absence of colour about Party Day garb? Isn’t that image?

‘Naw. We were at a funeral before we came here. We wear what we want. Black’s alright, in’it? Black just suits anybody. It’s nothing Gothic or owt like that. It’s better than gold lamé suits, that’s all. But we wanna concentrate more on us image, ‘cos we ain’t got one!’

I thought it came across pretty strongly tonight.

‘What, this black stuff?’ he reacts in mock-astonishment. ‘In that case we’ll wear it all the time! But no, we haven’t got that sort of BANG straightforward ‘did you SEE that band last night? Did you SEE what he was doing?’ Sure if you get in early on any sort of bandwagon you’re made for a while, but it soon fizzles out once you’ve ridden that wave. And that image you project, that’ll stick with you to the death. A lot of bands can’t live those images down – like the ‘Bat-Cave’ bands, like Specimen and Alien Sex Fiend. They’ll be out as quick as they came in. We’d soon get bored with all that anyway.’

Party Day don’t toe anyone’s Party Line, they just – as The Man says, Party Party!!!

It’s unfortunate that change seems to be in the air, just as the album’s on the brink of shoving them

out to their widest audience yet. A rift with long-time manager Steve Drury, plus rumours of realignments within the group itself – centred on Martin, complicate the equation. But hopefully we'll soon be into a post-shuffle period with Party Day in a clearer definition to fulfil the rich promise that **'Glasshouse'** makes.

Hopefully we'll soon also be in a post-Margaret Thatcher post-Ronald Reagan period too, then we can start thinking more of the future and less about the cults and ikons of the past. But until then you could do a lot worse than listen to Party Day.

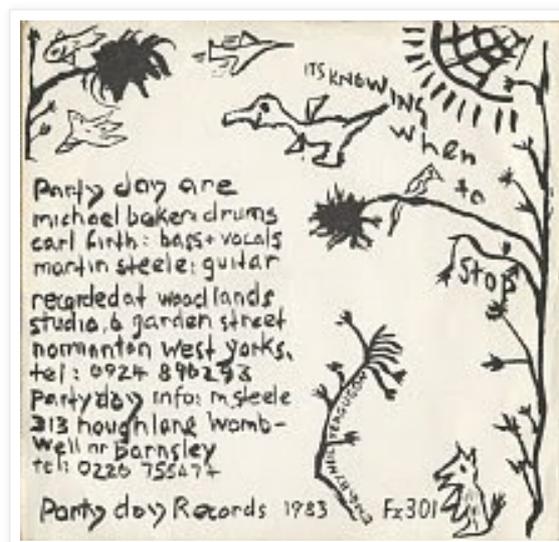
PARTY DAY: MORE FUN, LESS COLOUR

'They hold their guitars like loaded AK47s. They throb'
Seething 'Susan' Wells in 'New Musical Express'
(3 March 1984)

SINGLES

'SANS CULLOTES' (1983 cassette, 'Scented Tapes: The Smell Of Success' FX 001) with 'Values', 'Party Day', 'Them', 'Sadness To Serve'

'PARTY DAY' (1983 cassette, 'Superman And Wonders' FX 003) with 'Glasshouse', 'Opium Gathering' and 'Tin Sky'

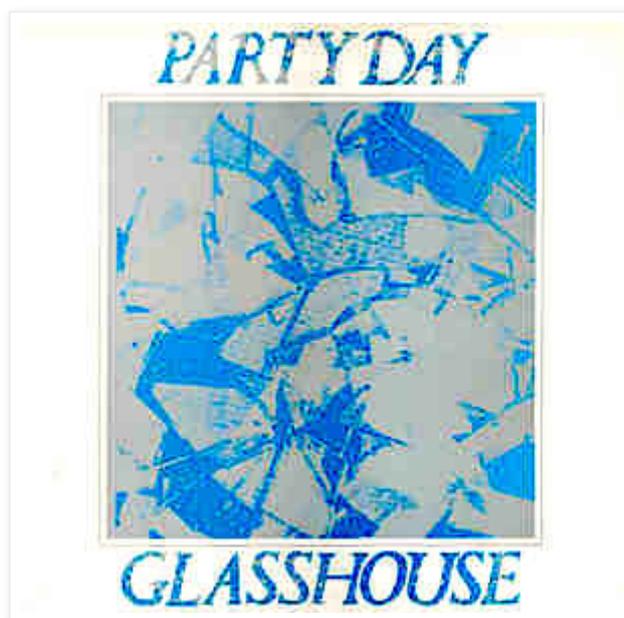


'Row The Boat Ashore' c/w "Poison" (July 1983, Party Day Records FX 301) reviewed in 'ZigZag' as 'their simpering and delightful sound is a thing of beauty' (July 1983)

'Spider' c/w "Flies" (April 1984, Party Day Records FX 302) reviewed as 'excellent punk junk howl' ('Sounds', 19 May 1984) www.youtube.com/watch?v=zR2Qh64AAgk

'GLASSHOUSE' EP (October 1985, Rouska Records Come 1T, 12" vinyl) includes "Glasshouse", "My Heroine", "Let Us Shine", "Smile"

ALBUMS



'GLASSHOUSE' (1985, Party Day Records FXLP 401) with side one: 'Rabbit Pie', 'Firehorse', 'Carousel', 'Atoms'. Side two: 'Boredom', 'Grace', 'Row The Boat Ashore', 'Athena'. Engineer, Neil Ferguson, at Woodlands Studio, Castleford. After the album's release Martin Steele quit due to 'poor health' and was replaced by Dean Peckett (who died 3 January 2016) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ROvp67Qf1E>

'SIMPLICITY' (1986, Party Day Records PDLP 501) with side one: 'She May Be Blind', 'Sovereign', 'Stay In My Heart', 'Laughter', 'Simplicity'. Side two 'The Other Side', 'Precious One', 'Career', 'A Passing Pain', 'Glorious Days', 'Untitled' reviewed as 'the attractive, though slightly overwrought black sheep, 'Glorious Days', which could have brought a lump to Mario Lanza's trousers' (Mick Mercer in 'Melody Maker', 12 July 1986). Paul Nash (guitar, vocals) and Shaun Crowcroft (bass) join in 1986 replacing Carl Firth, but Party Day split in 1988

'PORKTASTIC' (recorded in 1987, self-released 2016, MP3 only) with 'Aching', 'Deal', 'The Chain', 'And I Held Her Hand', 'Hymn', 'Take It Easy', 'Surge', 'Let's Spend The Night Together', 'Born Yesterday', 'Let It Show' plus bonus tracks 'Big Surge' and 'Milky Way' <https://www.discogs.com/Party-Day-Porktastic/release/10878457>

COMPILATIONS

"Party Day" on 'Real Time 5' (March 1983, Unlikely Records 5, cassette)

"Rabbit Pie" on 'Giraffe In Flames' (January 1984, Aaz records 001, vinyl LP) plus tracks by Nick Toczek, The Chorus, Sinister Cleaners etc <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17IRkHnQQhk>

"Rabbit Pie" on 'Band-It No.14' (March 1984, German cassette magazine no.14)

"Athena" on 'Four Your Ears Only' (Summer 1984, Belgium Play It Again Sam BIAS 02, vinyl 12" EP) plus tracks by Red Guitars, Luddites and Red Lorry Yellow Lorry

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"Opium Gathering" on 'Raw Red Heat' (Autumn 1984, Flame Tapes 1, cassette)

"Spider" on 'Raging Sun' (1985, Rouska Records RANT 01, vinyl LP, also cassette RUSK 006)

"Borderline" on 'Bites And Stabs' (1985, Torment Records TOR 001, vinyl LP)

"Let Us Shine" on 'Torn In Two' (1986, Torment Records TOR 002 compilation LP)

"Let Us Shine" on 'Zarah Leander's Greatest Hits' (1987, Rouska Records CONCORD 18, CD)

"Atoms" on 'Strobelights Vol.3' (2006, Strobelight Records STROB 020, compilation CD)

"Atoms" on 'Return Of The Batcave Vol.1' (2008, internet only, CD)

www.party-day.co.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/Party-Day-358138204248257/>



PARTY DAY: THE PARTY LINE

First time I saw Party Day.

An audience that shrieks with chic in a concrete tomb beneath the vast 'Clockwork Orange' multiplex of the Leeds 'Merrion Centre'. Amps switched up to infinity, a positive-trash power-trio roaring (geographically) outtta Danse Society territory. I'd heard their tapes, but live there's a hard sharp attacking edge that C30 chrome-dioxide can't trap. Like the result of twisted eugenics there's lots of familiar reference-points finger-printing their contagious stand-outs, "Athena", through "Opium Gathering", and into the riffing "Tin Sky", but they come out laundered oddly fresh.

A six-month later, after a single in a Dayglo bag promoted through a concentrated swamp-operation gig schedule, I see them a second time, churning into a high-sweat situation in a glass 'n' concrete 'Beckett's Park' Students Union Hall. They start out by verbally taunting the 'lazy' audience, deliberately provoking adversarial response, until they get all the attention-fix they need. What was once promise is now parallel bars of spiral spinal craggy jagged energy rush. What Bart Bartie calls 'sheet metal and hysterical pagan' music (in '**NME**').

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'There's a lot to be said for guitar, bass and drums' drawls heavy-built guitarist Martin Steele. 'People just kinda latched onto synths. We've tried synths, but they won't fit in for us. You can do owt on a guitar – as you've just witnessed!'

'With just three members in the group the ideas are kept more together' agrees bassist Carl Firth. 'Whereas if there's more people involved...'

'...your ideas get watered down.'

Drummer Michael Baker, crop-headed and unshaven, comes in – 'it's tighter and quicker', with an admirably concise summation.

'We wanna get away from that thrash-Punk thing though' adds Martin in thick slow seams of Barnsley accent. 'We've had a bit of constructive criticism over it. Some of our songs are fairly melodic and I think we ought to develop that more. There's nowt wrong with a melody when all's said and done. It can be weird. It can be whatever you want.'

The single – combining "Row The Boat Ashore" with "Poison" (Party Day Records), shows this development already, but for what it's worth, a track called "Athena" – even now emerging on the Belgium compilation EP 'Four Your Ears Only' (Play It Again Sam label), sounds a stone classic to these jaded ears. When they do it live its chorus-chant is instantly memorable, yet its after-burn hints at more subtle energies.

Cabaret Voltaire once defined Sheffield for me as a 'negative influence', being a recession-blitzed steel town where nothing ever happens it provided a vacuum that they had to fill. But 'there's plenty to do in Barnsley' asserts Martin, in the kind of dead-pan Party Day send-up line I'm now getting attuned to. 'You can go and watch a good game of football. Or get pissed. It depends.' But he did neither. 'I knew when I was about six that I was gonna form a group. That was my ambition.' And through various evolutionary personnel shifts, tonight is the logical end-product of that ambition. Party Day is a name lifted from an early song, just as the name 'Joy Division' was taken from a song, it's superficially upbeat, masking a menacing nihilism. The name is 'a bit cynical' admits Martin. 'Nothing is as it appears. There's a lot of underlying nastiness in a lot of our things. It's sinister.'

'We don't want to get to the top too quick, or get noticed too quick. You've got to build a steady following if you wanna get anywhere permanent. So we'll just keep going. I reckon we'll become a sort of Pink Floyd-Hawkwind band – in a different context. You don't know any of the people out of Hawkwind, but you know the name. We're a wholemeal band. Natural ingredients...'

So where does "Opium Gathering" come in? Is that a natural ingredient?

Martin picks up on the line mischievously. 'I wrote that. Me and Michael. My half is about going to bed with somebody...' A calculated pause. '... I don't know what his half is about!'

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(UK – July 1984)



Andrew Darlington at 11:18

3 comments:



THE ONLY TRUE HACKER IN THE WORLD ® 21 March 2020 at 07:48

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William Eddie 22 May 2020 at 07:23

I want to share a testimony of how Dr OSAGIE herbal mixture cream saved me from shame and disgrace, my penis was a big problem to me as the size was really so embarrassing ,and i was also having weak erection problem i had so many relationship called off because of my situation,m i have used so many product which i found online but none could offer me the help i searched for Which was very painful and then i saw some few testimonies about this herbal specialist called Dr OSAGIE and decided to email him on so I gave his herbal product a try. i emailed him and he got back to me and we discussed, he gave me some comforting words and encouraged me also ans then gave me his herbal pills and cream for Penis Enlargement Within 1 week of it, i began to feel the enlargement of my penis, " and now it just 2 weeks of using his products my penis is about 9.7 inches longer and am so happy contact Dr OSAGIE via drosagiesolutionhome5 @ gmail. com Via whatapp +2348034778129.

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Tucker Conrad 11 November 2020 at 18:12

A GREAT SPELL CASTER (DR. EMU) THAT HELP ME BRING BACK MY EX GIRLFRIEND.
Am so happy to testify about a great spell caster that helped me when all hope was lost for me to unite with my ex-girlfriend that I love so much. I had a girlfriend that love me so much but something terrible happen to our relationship one afternoon when her friend that was always trying to get to me was trying to force me to make love to her just because she was been jealous of her friend that i was dating and on the scene my girlfriend just walk in and she thought we had something special doing

andrewdarlington.blogspot.com/2020/03/band-interview-party-day.html together, i tried to explain things to her that her friend always do this whenever she is not with me and i always refuse her but i never told her because i did not want the both of them to be enemies to each other but she never believed me. She broke up with me and I tried times without numbers to make her believe me but she never believed me until one day i heard about the DR. EMU and I emailed him and he replied to me so kindly and helped me get back my lovely relationship that was already gone for two months.

Email him at: Emutemple@gmail.com

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