

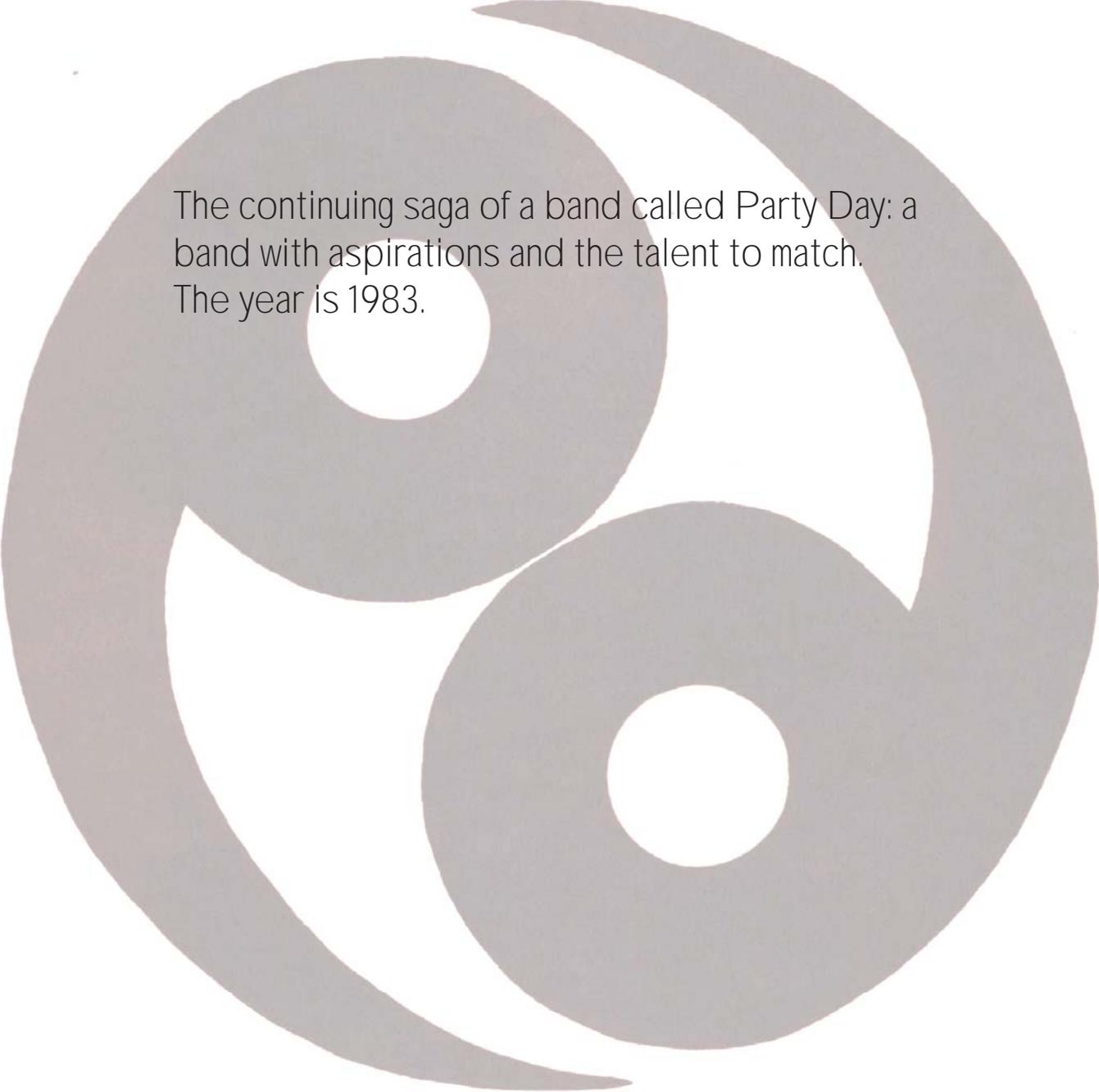
PARTY DAY

Not Enough Monkeys

the early days of a struggling band



Words and Photos by Steve Drury



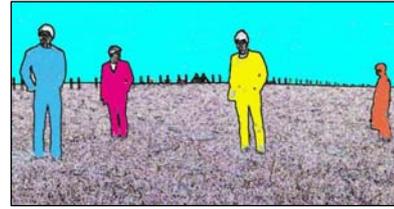
The continuing saga of a band called Party Day: a band with aspirations and the talent to match. The year is 1983.

And the story continues...

Five months later

10 May

The next step: "We need to release a single"



Today I had an appointment with the bank manager. This was to secure a loan of £500 for the band, because we needed to release a single. As far as I was concerned my immediate future with the band rested on its outcome. At the bank I wanted to be upfront with Mr Money, rather than him thinking that I was buying a hi-fi or a car, which I know would have made it easier for him to say "Yes" to, I had decided to put my faith in my own ability to sell the band. I wanted to show him why it would be a good gamble for the bank to give me the money. I wanted to release our first single on our very own label. He listened to my argument and enquired into the pros and cons. When he finally said "Yes" to my application, I came out of the bank feeling as if I'd just scored the winning goal during injury time of the FA Cup Final.

Later on I met Martin and told him of my news. Now we were two happy chaps.

Our only foreseeable problem was what songs will be on the single. At this stage it doesn't matter too much. We've been talking about releasing a single for ages, but had decided to keep it open as to which song it should be. This is just as well, as various songs have been in and out of favour over the last few weeks.

We've decided it will definitely be a summer release as this is a time when possibly major bands won't be so active. Therefore I'm hoping for a quiet summer for us to fill. And in the circles we want to be in, the typical Spanish beach hit which infects the summer charts won't be any cause for concern. Unless we do 'Una Paloma Blanca' ourselves! I shudder at the thought of it.

12 May

At the rehearsal tonight, there was a definite buzz of excitement in the air. The band seemed happier to work on the new songs rather than to discuss which songs to record. I guess from the current set list, 'Glasshouse' would be the obvious contender. We know it's a crowd-pleaser and it's almost a sing-along at gigs, but maybe it's a little too cute and wholesome.

"The game's afoot", so to speak.

Also Carl gave me the dates of his forthcoming exams, so I can sort out dates for our gigs. We don't need to clash on these.

Finally after much debate the idea of a 'Fourth man' for the band has been dropped. Over the last few months we had tried out a couple of keyboard players, but it hasn't really worked out for the band. So now they can concentrate on becoming a substantial 3 piece.

Later at home, I wrote the press release for our next gig in Sheffield. As for the photo, I'd decided to use one of the other photos from our last photo session, and I'll send it to the Chronicle tomorrow.

It's been a great positive day.

17 May

The debate over what song for the single has become very heated. At the moment the band is in the red corner and there's just me in the blue corner. I want it to be 'In Australia', a loud brash catchy song which is slightly reminiscent of the Stranglers... and basically they don't want that one. Carl said it was too light, and also this was why 'Glasshouse' became a non starter in the last few days. However they all agree on one song for the single and it's a new one called 'Row the Boat Ashore'. I still need to be convinced on this one. Do we need to take a risk



with a song that hasn't really been sorted out yet? It's so new, the first coat of paint is still wet. I do wonder if they're just winding me up?

However we are in synch when it comes to what the packaging of the single should be. We wanted it to be distinctive, and Martin thought, what we needed was a brightly coloured cloth bag with the band's name screen-printed onto it. "Excellent, so long as everyone does their bit with this labour intensive idea, that includes the sewing." We all agreed to have a special cotton bag for the first 1000 copies, and if, I mean, when it goes to a re-press, we'll use a cardboard version. We will need a re-press to break even on the costs.

The only strange thing to come to light at tonight's rehearsal was that Martin's cousin has been suggesting setting up a few dates for them and I guess he's trying on my shoes for size. It seems that everyone who is vaguely connected with the band is catching 'the buzz' and wants to be on board ship. On the other hand, Martin might just be going along with his cousin's waffle to wind me up ... if so, he's doing a damn good job too.

19 May

Sent off the registration details for our record label, it's gonna be simply called Party Day Records. I'd got the band to agree on the name, as a fancy one might be misleading. I wanted it to be crystal clear that this was our own 'tin-pot' label and not some other minor's 'tin-pot' label. Hopefully we'll be picked up by a major label or at the least one that's not too minor.

Today I finally relented on the choice for the single as the band was still totally behind 'Row the Boat Ashore' (RTBA). I still wasn't convinced but what was the point in pushing the band to record a song they didn't agree with. Just because it's my money didn't mean they shouldn't have a say. So it'll be 'RTBA'... and as they're rolling with it, another new one called 'Poison' will back it as a double A-sided single. I don't really mind that they want it to be a double single, but there's nothing wrong with having a b-side, and besides, people will see the AA side as the lesser of the two songs anyway. Also 'Poison' doesn't have the immediacy of RTBA. It really is a b-side.

For the rest of the packaging, Martin has designed the logo for the band name, which will be on the cover of the cloth bags. It's nothing fancy but the logo looks grand. His year on an Art Foundation course hadn't been wasted, but it's a pity his course didn't include needlework. I told them that I'll design the actual label for the single with some letraset font sheets I already have, and have a unrelated photo of mine on one side. Definitely didn't want to use a photo of the band (to preserve the mystique). Martin wanted to choose the photo and this was fine by me.



That bloody cousin of his is still a pain in the arse, as he's now coming up with daft ideas for them. He's been suggesting tiny pubs in the middle of nowhere to play in. Guess he can't think big and also I've noticed he doesn't realise this adventure doesn't fund itself. So I'm gonna ignore him, he's not so much a threat as a little Jack Russell snapping at my heels.

And there's more aggravation tonight at the rehearsals, this time concerning the Leadmill date this coming Saturday. Now the band wasn't keen on my plans for the running order. I wanted 'Creatures of Habit' (COH) on first but the band wanted them on last. I know it's a 'joint' gig but I not only organised this but did all the donkey work for Party Day, and not for any other band. I want us to be on last on. Also they were not keen on 'Vicious Circles' (VC) playing at all on the day. This was an

agreement of mine which they were fine with earlier. Who's rattling their cage? We could not now change this. I can't believe they felt threatened by this band. As far as the band were concerned it was left unresolved tonight, but I wasn't gonna move on this.

20 May

I went to London today to enquire at several pub venues as we really need to have a London date to connect up with the single's release date. I'd managed to hit quite a few of my target venues, and only caught one wrong tube train! At the Rock Garden I gave the promoter our cassette tape. He seemed quite interested and asked me to ring him later in the week. I had a good feeling about this one; in fact on the whole I enjoyed today and being part of the biz.

I was still on a high by the time I got back into Barnsley and was there in plenty of time for a drink on the local poser circuit. All the band were already there preening themselves, and this had been mainly due to the photo-article that had appeared in the today's pop column of the Chronicle, which was advertising tomorrow's gig. That's planning. The article looked very impressive and I even managed to get in a few name checks. Also in the music column was a piece on Dennis McGinnley's new gig agency, based at his Streetlife Studios. This venture would find venues for local bands and would also organise their live appearances. It's all very local-minded and somehow I don't think this agency is for us.



When I got home, I found out that Red Rhino won't be at the gig tomorrow as promised, and that Beggars Banquet had returned our demo tape almost by return post. Had they listened to it? Still even this didn't annoy me too much as it's their problem not mine.

21 May - Leadmill, Sheffield

Well if the location is Sheffield, then at the moment, it's only natural that we were fated to fail and today's gig didn't buck the trend. The Leadmill, for their part, managed, or rather mismanaged, the event. Recently the Leadmill had decided to put local bands on Saturday afternoons as a show of their commitment to the area, but we soon realised this was only done in a cheap and half-hearted way.

On our arrival for the planned afternoon gig I found out that the House PA was only for the vocals and it was not the full PA as I'd been led to believe. Also we couldn't find the sound engineer. He turned up some 90 minutes later, which according to the day's tight schedule meant time was very tight. This was because the Leadmill had imposed a strict schedule for the whole event. Everyone had to be out of the venue before the 'real' (paid) bands showed up for the evening's gig. Everyone was going spare just hanging around, just waiting. Patience was wearing very thin.

And then Party Day went all democratic on me and still demanded that the COH headline the gig. I seemed to be banging my head against a brick wall. However they eventually saw reason, as we'd done all the leg work and why we should headline. Finally they agreed with me that COH were going on first. The only band without an ego here today was the loveable VC and they didn't mind when they went on.

Thanks to the lateness of the sound engineer, the original time for the COH to go on came and went. The engineer was still sorting out their sound check. In fact due to timing that was the only sound check anyone got. The engineer said "He'd sort us out on our first number". I'd heard this one before and really didn't believe him but what could we do by then.

As soon as COH were on, Martin began pleading with me to let them go on next and not VC. Time was running out and he was getting desperate. What could I do? They are my band, so I relented and changed the running order. VC, to their credit, were fine about this and agreed to go on last.

So much for all the aggravation on whose headlining! And, as if to add salt upon an open wound, Party Day began their Set at breakneck speed. The sound engineer (now definitely a loose description) turned this and that knob on the mixing desk and created a truly dreadful noise which was drowned out in a tidal wave of distortion. I guess the band couldn't get offstage fast enough

and even dropped out their final song. Party Day finished abruptly and quickly left the stage to the sound of screeching feedback from thrown down guitars.

Oh crap!

Finally VC began their songs but only managed to play for five minutes before the staff of the Leadmill cut the power to end it all. Like the shambles we'd begun with, a vicious cycle (sic) no less. I felt really sick about this and promised to make it up to VC in the near future. They'd deserved better treatment than this.

The Leadmill had certainly missed out the School of Charm from their collective education. And like a barman shouting "Times up gentlemen", they continued with their helpful line and wanted everyone out as soon as possible. We felt like trespasses. The atmosphere stunk rotten and it was bound to get worse.

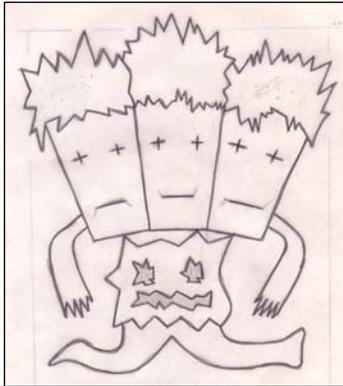
Then someone had damaged the toilets. The police were sent for. In the meantime the dressing room had been redecorated with graffiti from a spray can. And as Martin had some paint on his clothes, they dubbed him as the offender and he was duly arrested for criminal damage.

The police shoved a bemused Martin into the police car, which then sharply sped away. We hurriedly packed up our gear into the van hoping to give chase, but we were just about to leave when the van was surrounded by the Leadmill lads. Now it appears someone had now stolen a microphone and they thought it must be us, why not?

They didn't want us to leave and they made their point blatantly so. They wanted to check our gear, and all we could do was to empty the van under protest. All the gear: guitar cases, cabinets, drums were sprawled across the road while they rummaged through it like it was a car boot sale. Finally they admitted defeat and there was no apology from them. We repacked the van amid a barrage of insults and accusations.

"You'll never play here again or in Sheffield for that matter. We'll see to that."

"Yeah, really".



I was truly glad to get away from that hell-hole and now we raced off to the cop shop. The PC at the reception desk told us that we couldn't see Martin as the charges were currently being fitted.... err, prepared. We didn't know how long it was going to take, and as there seemed no point in waiting around for him, we left. The hire van had to go back today. I had intended to return to Sheffield later in my car; however by the time I got home, Martin had rung me. It seems they'd released him once the Leadmill had dropped their charges and he was catching the next train home.

We spent the evening in the local pub analysing the day's events. Today was a bloody nightmare, a total disaster. Definitely not a good day.

23 May

Oh dear! Found out today that Radio Hallam's producer had been at the Leadmill debacle. Needless to say she wasn't impressed by the band. I felt a radio session slipping through my hands.

It was time for me to put this episode behind us for good. Time to put my mind back onto the plan of the single, and today I made the arrangements for Alternative Music to press up the single.

24 May

At the rehearsal, the atmosphere was still rank due to the Leadmill gig, but I think I'd managed to convince them that it's all part and parcel of our problem with Sheffield. Anyway, we had more urgent matters tonight that needed our attention, namely our impending studio visit this weekend. We ran through the two songs a few times and Martin tried out a few variations. The lad does like to try things out and usually to the song's benefit.

27 May - Woodlands Studio, Normanton

Really big day today as we were gonna create our first single.

However, first stop was to sign for the bank loan which didn't take very long. Then I picked up the hire van and a few hours later we were happily sorting ourselves out at Woodlands studio. This studio does feel like home to us. We had one day to record and mix the final version (even with the loan money added to the pot). This time it was only two songs to sort out, and not three or four, as we'd done for the demos. This was much better.

It all went very well and everyone was on a genuine high. Martin's little touches of cascading buzz-saw guitars during 'Row The Boat Ashore' complimented Carl's acidic voice. His singing has really progressed of late. It seems he'd been a little worried about it this week, as he thought he was catching a cold. However, it appears it has helped his voice tonally. Fortunately we managed not to stretch him with too many re-takes.

As for Carl's lyrics, he was crouched down in various corners of the studio scribbling like mad during the day. It did make me wonder what he'd been singing about before. And today after a few vocal versions, I still don't know what he's singing about.

As for 'Poison', it does compliment the A-side very well and it's a grower of a song that doesn't have the immediacy nor the intensity of the 'Row the Boat Ashore'.

The mix was quite straight forward and as there were no overruns, we were still on budget. I gave Neil half the payment today, which was OK by him. We left the studio with about a dozen cassette copies, and the twin tape master reel safely tucked under my arm.

28 May

Well I'm still listening to the tape and it still sounds great. In fact everyone else still likes it too. So it looks like it's working out much as we'd planned so far. As for Carl's lyrics and vocals, they did the job. Solid work.

29 May

Wrote off to the MCP today informing them of our impending release, which will now be the 15th July.

The next item on my agenda was to sort out a distributor and it must be fairly quickly too, so I busied myself with packaging yet more cassette copies for all possible independent distributors.

For the single's packaging I'd managed to buy the first batch of cotton material today. This I gladly gave to Martin to deal with. Now it's time to find out how the band's sewing skills are.

02 June

My actual real work, the one I get paid for is getting a bit tired of me. I think that I've stretched my luck very thin of late, as I am hardly ever there. The way I see it is as I don't get Sick pay - who cares really. So no change today, as I didn't make it in. I had much better things to do. I know this is a problem that won't go away, but I'll ignore it for the moment.

Sent off the first instalment of £150.00 along with the inner white sleeves, to Alternative Music, for the pressing of the single. Our plan is for the pressing plant to prepare the single in plain white bags, and then we'll collect them ourselves. In the meantime, the band is busy with the production

of the cloth sleeves. Carl and Mick are temporarily working at Junction 37 screen printing the logo onto each bag. It's all coming along rather smoothly if a little slow.

After work, I found out that my last trip to London hadn't made any headway at all, as the Rock Garden had now said 'No' to us. I really must find a London gig for them to play very soon.

06 June

Today was a major day as Martin and I travelled to London to oversee the cutting of the metal master plates for the single by the legendary 'Porky Prime Cut' man himself. We gave him the reel tape and he set about sorting out his recording levels for his system.

"Sounds a bit tinny lads".

We were horrified, but he was right. We looked at each other non-plussed.

"How about I boost up the bass?" Which he then proceeded to do to show us what the difference was. In the end we both had to agree with him, it was much better. It was now obvious to the both of us that our cherished tapes of the songs had been lacking something. But as of now it exploded out of the speakers. We were grateful to him and trusted his experience. Up went the bass frequencies... and the crackling noise levels (adding some raw energy). Porky then asked us if we wanted to scratch a message on the run-off section, as he could engrave it directly onto the metal plate. Martin couldn't resist the idea. So 'Ale to be had' was engraved on the disc. At least it was something close to his heart (if not quite Shakespeare).

We both left Porky's on a high, and the metal plates were instantly being biked across town to the pressing plant. The rest should now be history. We had the rest of the day to relax as we had a few hours spare in town before our return train.

While we were sitting in a London Pub, 'The George' I think, Martin unintentionally loaded our collective dice, by telling me that he was now quitting his job. After all once the single is out, the band's wagon will soon shift into fifth gear and the road ahead becomes open. I see this dream too, but also feel a little cautious. It might not be that immediate. Well, Martin wants to concentrate on his music. Luckily I've got a pint in front of me to dwell on this latest event.

Much later and due to my hampered befuddled brain, we got separated. Martin had managed to catch the 7pm train to Sheffield, whilst I'd decided to stay for another drink and then catch a later train. However, this later train only existed in my mind. I got to St. Pancras at about 10pm with no hope of getting home. I had to catch a train or at least find somewhere to spend the night. I'd felt very reluctant to kip down at the station (as if they'd let me). The only solution open to me as far as I could see was to catch the midnight train to Derby and sleep there! At least I'd feel a bit safer there even if I wasn't.

Unfortunately the Derby train was a trip through Dante's inferno. Not only did it stop at every conceivable station, cross-road, picket fence (presumably gathering mail), but also this tatty old coach train was insufferably hot. I had hoped to sleep it off during the journey but all I did was fidget and scratch an imaginary hair shirt as often as it was physically possible to do. No sleep 'till Derby!

The train eventually made it to Derby four hours later. In the waiting room at Derby, I'd managed to sleep for only two blissful hours but was still determined to catch the first available northbound train. Still groggy I rang work whilst waiting for this train and told them of my plight and that I was now stuck in Derby. It was early, I was tired, I just couldn't think of another 'sick' excuse and it all sounded so ridiculous. They must have believed me, although the conversation had all the impending doom feeling of a 'see me after school', to face tomorrow.

Finally I got home at midday and collapsed onto my bed, p'haps to dream.

7 June

Woke up late (not surprisingly) to some interesting mail, I'd received a letter from the Elephant Fayre promoter in Plymouth. The good news was that he's considering us an opening act at the festival. I'd sent him a demo tape months ago. As we're an unknown it's probably still too early for us to expect anything else really, but that's fine by me. It seems he'd only become interested in us when The Cure's record label mentioned us. For the record, I'd sent Fiction a copy of our demo tape earlier but they hadn't replied to me. It now seems the promoter was attempting to get The Cure to headline the Weekend Event, and we got a mention. Now that would be a fantastic sign of approval and a weekend for us. This is definitely a feather in the cap, and later when I told Martin, he was dead chuffed too.

Later that night, I still had time to package yet another demo tape, this time it was destined for a Dutch agent that John of 'UV Pop' had told me about, the other day. Apparently northern bands do quite well in Northern Europe. So the idea of a short tour over there was very appealing to me, let's face it, it'll be the only way a holiday (of sorts) is going to materialise.

Only today do I really begin to realise that after Martin kisses his job goodbye that I stand alone financially. He's been helping out with the equipment side, so I hope we're good for a while. Fortunately for everyone I feel in luck mode and I have no desire to be pigeon-holed as the grand mug of all the mugs. Although I didn't need it, I now had even more incentive to really push this single all the way.

8 June

Don't know what my horoscope says for this week, but maybe I should've done the pools, as today was another excellent day. After I'd phoned up the distributors to follow up on our cassette tape, I'd managed to get a bite - Red Rhino had said 'Yes to us'. So I quickly arranged to go up to York and discuss the finer details. Also I'll take the band along with me; it'll be good for them to see the distributor as well. I'm gonna drive up, as I'm sure my car will survive the round trip to York. I know Martin still wants me to sell it and buy a transit van for the band. I'm sure it's a good idea but I'd rather have a car at the moment. Maybe I should ask him to get a van with the tax money he'll get back when he leaves his job!¹

Later I dropped in on our 'Sewing Circle' to tell them of the Red Rhino news; which went down very well. As regards to their handiwork, the more experienced they've become, the better the stitching is. 'par excellence' in fact.

All I have to do is to buy the material, which I'm becoming quite fussy at. Never thought I'd be seriously choosing which fabric and colours would be best for us. So far we've used 5 separate colours and our single seems to be becoming a limited edition within a limited edition.

The band's merchandising machine is in full flow and when they're not screen printing the sleeves, they're running off a few T-shirts for themselves, and a few extras to sell amongst the Barnsley tribe. Maybe we can get them all to wear a Party Day T-shirt. I gave Carl my denim shirt to print the logo on, as I thought it'd be a laugh wearing it at our gigs along with my hand painted gold shoes. I never said I was a leader of fashion.

Everyone's excited at the way the bandwagon's rolling. Also they're very keen on the idea of a tour of Holland, so I'm just waiting for the response now.

9 June

A new day, and a fresh reject – still this doesn't upset me, as it's par for the course. Today it was the turn of Neptune Publishing to return our tape, with a 'thank you-but no thank you' card. I must admit I wasn't too bothered about this particular one, as I still can't seem to sort out a London date for us to be seen, at the moment.

I really do need a gig on the weekend of the single's release, and almost as a last resort, I'd decided to take up the offer from La Phonographique's in Leeds. They'd asked us if we wanted a

¹ *Martin eventually got himself a sexy new guitar!*

return date and they agreed on the weekend I wanted. The venue is fantastic and I know the band will look forward to playing there again. The last time we were there, the atmosphere had been electric. And we might be able to sell a few copies on the night.

10 June

Today phoned up The Cure's agent and was told that they'd decided not to play the Elephant Fayre after all. I felt a knock-on effect was about to take place. I must get back to the Elephant Fayre's promoter soon to find out if this changes things for us.

11 June

It wasn't long before some equipment broke down, so I ended up taking Carl's Hi-Watt amplifier into a repair shop today. Seems it's been giving him lots of trouble of late - over-heating and causing the sound to break up. But at this week's rehearsal it had completely died. Mick did have a look at it but it's beyond his capabilities at the moment. In fact I've begun to notice that we seem to be going through a spell of equipment trouble. This only leads to the band to discuss what they'll buy with the windfall from our single. A lot is riding on this single, but why not! Bands do have a perfect start with their first single. I really hope it all works out, but for my part, being able to break even is a good target.

Later on in Leeds, I met up with Len Liggins² in his studio. He told me of his grand scheme of putting Leeds on the map with a compilation LP. Although I'm initially wary of compilations and specifically the small mindedness of most (I'd already rejected several duff ideas in the last few months, for example, the duff idea that was the Streetlife LP, which had been aimed too locally for such a small area. There'd be no sales as all the bands would be trying to sell to each other!). But this one does seem quite interesting and may have great potential. The deal breaker for me is that Len plans to sell it at a bargain low price of £2.99³, which must be a tempting price to curious record buyers. I have seen far too many compilations of unknowns sell at a full price and who is really going to splash out that much money on a whim or one known track. We all know most compilations fall far too short of their promises. The usual deal is that we supply one track and a portion of the cost, and in return we get a few copies to sell. And this compilation will have a larger market.

I must persuade the band to get on board with this compilation and it does appeal to me that we would have another release (albeit a track on a compilation) available very soon after the single. After all, if the single isn't our immediate saviour that we're seeking, this will at least, keep up the momentum.

For the trip home I picked up a copy of the latest 'Whippings and Apologies' fanzine. I was very surprised to see it had a review of the Leadmill gig. Even more surprised to see that Party Day didn't even get a mention. Instead it praised COH glowingly. Now I realised that they had got the fanzine to come along to the gig. So much for a joint effort! Although I shared my contacts for the gig, it now appears it was a truly one-way street. I don't mind too much that COH did this to us this time, but I'm not sure in the future what they define as 'mutual co-operation'. I will need to be careful about 'the others', for our sake. Fortunately as it was a terrible gig for Party Day, the lack of any mention I believe was a lucky break for us.

12 June

Martin loves the compilation idea and has agreed with it, so I'm sure that the others will follow, given time.

But the big news today was that I received the vinyl test recordings of the single. There was a knock on the door from the postman and a package for me. The plates are actually made on 12" vinyl, so it looks rather strange as it has lots of unused vinyl. The test recordings give us the chance to check the sound quality from the metal plates. Unfortunately neither Martin nor I have a decent record player, never mind one that has excellent hi-fi quality. A friend of ours, Bob has a fantastic Hi-fi, so off we marched round to his place. Firstly to play him an exclusive and secondly to check it!

² Len, the eventual singer of *The Ukrainians*.

³ The standard price for an LP in 1984 was about £7.00.

Bob was only too willing to listen to it. So we all sat in the lightened room while the needle lifted off the rest and sat down on the vinyl's run-in groove. A few seconds later and the song burst forth from the speakers. We played it several times and tried to figure out what we should be listening out for. An hour later, we're still no wiser but as we couldn't find anything that was unexpected, it must be fine. So far, so good.

What with all the recent excitement, I'd managed to (or miss-managed) my phone bill and let it slip through my hands unpaid but Telecoms hadn't forgot. So today I was disconnected for missing one bill. Maybe this was a blessing in disguise as it's one bill less anyway to worry about at the moment. So from now on I shall start giving out Martin's number as the main contact number, plus it'll also make him feel a bit more involved on the business side of things.

17 June

The band's day out so to speak. We're in York today. The journey up was uneventful and optimistic and we found Red Rhino's warehouse fairly easily (since the Sheffield incident I've begun to dread one way systems) and there, we met Tony, the man in charge. He seemed genuinely interested in the band. We got the VIP treatment and we were shown around the warehouse. It had floor to ceiling racks full of singles. All the guys there were very busy, obviously not for our benefit - just the day to day activities of running a distribution company.

Red Rhino loved the single and they were most impressed with its packaging too. We soon got down to talking about percentages and profit margins. It became apparent to us that we'd have to accept the basic rate of 50% of its retail price. I know that we have to start somewhere but this now makes me even hungrier for that re-press. It's a cost that we have to bare at the moment. For the future, we'll need to be in a stronger position so we can ask for a better percentage. We accepted the current deal with Red Rhino.

Afterwards we strolled off to a nearby pub to discuss life and it was time to put the world to right whilst enjoying games of pool and talking shop. I managed to get Martin to agree on hurrying up with the artwork for the sleeve insert. Everyone is keen to finish the cotton sleeves (there's still a lot of cutting, printing and sewing to be done). It's now only a month to our release date and so far we have only a fifth of the sleeves completed.

As we're riding on a high, I asked and got the final OK from the lads on Len's Compilation LP. We even managed to agree on which song to record for it, a jolly catchy song called 'Rabbit Pie'.

So I'm just left with sorting out a new studio date for it, and if we stick to our current pattern of recording and mixing two songs in a day, we'll also have a completed 'spare' song without any further costs, which could come in handy later⁴.

In the end what with our business in York and the next step sorted out, I didn't think the day could have gone better. Progress at this pace should not be stopped.

21 June

Even though Party Day as a unit is gathering pace and is hardly stuck in the mud both Martin and Mick have got themselves a pair of mega itchy feet! So for one night only (maybe), the two of them sorted out and played a gig tonight as The Plastic Spiders, at the White Hart in Barnsley. It seems it was all done rather hastily, but I went along with it. I did get the gig listed in the Chronicle's Pop Column, and of course, I strongly denied any suggestion of a split within the ranks of Party Day. Pompously stating that Party Day were the sum of many parts and were all the better for it. Also it was an opportunity to publicise our forthcoming single. At least our single will be released, unlike what tends to happen with other locals bands, whose 'forthcoming single' is continually stuck in Never Never Land, for umpteen amounts of reasons.



⁴ The track was timed perfectly to be later included on the 'Four Your Ears Only' EP

The Barnsley clique we're in the know and this made certain that the gig was well attended. Onstage Martin and Mick experimented and doodled their way through a set of songs that had strong overtones of Public Image. The gig went down well and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. For me, it did feel a bit like I was in the presence of the 'Emperor's new clothes'. Musically I found it very suspect and not at all original (but in the grand scheme of things, it was just a playful hiccup in the proceedings).

23 June

I'm still chasing that elusive London date that we need for the single and this afternoon I succeeded in speaking to the promoter of the Greyhound venue in Fulham. I wanted that London date so bad. I'm speaking to him on a public phone and coin after coin continues to disappear into the phone slot quicker than I can string a sentence together, but we got the thumbs down. He told me he'd received our demo tape, had played it and then said "No, for the time being", as he wanted to see what the press interest from our first single would be. To me, this is all so 'Catch 22'. How can we get enough interest if we can't play. It's just like before, no-one wants to stick their own neck out first.

Later on I travelled up to Woodlands studio to pay Neil the final amount for our last studio time. Fortunately he'd agreed on a price reduction in exchange for a credit on the single. I wasn't sure he'd do this but it all helps us, and I guess he knows we love to record there. Whilst there I sorted out a studio date for next month and it'll be the same weekend as the Single's release. My feeling is that this will be a good alternative from not playing live that weekend in London.

I feel that I've failed them not getting that crucial London date, but believe that focussing on radio plays is a good way to go.

By 2.00am I had still not finished the content for our Press Release letter, as my creative ideas had dried up. So maybe tomorrow I'll hopefully be more imaginative to finish it.

27 June

Sent off several more demo tapes to various promoters today and it did make me wonder just how many tapes does a promoter usually receive in a day? Probably more than they can listen to. So what grabs them? the name? the packaging? I just hope ours is eye-catching and memorable enough.

Today's good news was from the Asgard Talent Agency. They had written back to me and stated that they liked the single's demo tape and are very keen to see us live. Aren't we all! I must sort out THAT London date before they forget us.

28 June

The Press Release is now sorted. All I need now for the full package is a new photo of the band. We've planned to do this tomorrow.

29 June

Rang Alternative Music today as they should have finished pressing the single by now, and the news is they hadn't. It seems disaster had struck when the metal plates cracked. What sort of luck is this? Do this happen often? So as of today, they had pressed up 800 copies but it'll be another two weeks before they can get our order completed. In the scheme of things we're still small fry for them. This is really cutting it fine for our deadline, but we'll have to grin and bear it. Later on I rang up Red Rhino and informed them of the situation. They weren't happy either with this set back.

On the plus side today, I've sorted out an interview for the band with the Chronicle to tie in with the single.

Our journey which consists of swings and roundabouts continued today, as Mick failed to turn up for the photo session, so that's it scrapped for another day. This had better have just been a mistake on his part. Now more than ever we need 100% from everyone.

30 June

Rehearsal night. As they're all here, and it's a good June evening with excellent weather, it was photo time. I just took them onto the nearby wasteland and that was that. No subtext to the photos, just simplicity. I'll print them up tomorrow and then they'll be ready for use. Mick did apologise for last night's non-appearance.



The La Phonographique gig is coming up soon and it was Carl's turn to create the poster for the gig, which he'd brought in tonight. I'll take it into the printers during my lunch hour tomorrow, along with Martin's design for the sleeve insert.

3 July

Back to the printers, and I'm collecting our latest completed artwork. It's a shame they wouldn't give me a discount, as they've been getting quite a bit of work from me lately. The print copies are good and I'm happy with them.

Our well oiled machine continues rolling, for the single we now have most of the cotton bags done (printed and sewn) and the inserts ready.

Also as the next gig is just around the corner, we're all in Leeds tonight pasting up posters for the gig. I'm driving around, at kerb crawling pace, as Carl and Mick both scramble out of the car; one carrying the wallpaper paste and brush and the other a poster. It's a split second operation: Mick slaps the paste onto the wall, Carl sticks up the poster and then Mick spreads on another layer of paste onto the front of it, making sure Carl's hands get well and truly covered in the bargain. Within a few seconds there would be two or three Party Day posters up side by side. Then it's a mad dash back into the car as I speed away to our next location. Finally the posters were all up and the kerb crawling finished with for today. It was just another night on the edge of a law abiding society. I did wonder which would look better on a criminal record for me: Kerb Crawling or Bill Posting. And if Bill Posting just says 'stupid', what does it say if you're done twice for it.

5 July

800 copies of the vinyl copy of the single were delivered to my home today. A momentous moment and an ambition statement. It was great to see so many copies, hopefully destined for proper homes and not a bargain bin in some backwater town.

I placed the boxes of singles in my bedroom, along with the press releases, the sleeve inserts, the promo photos and most of the completed sleeves. Does this fit the term 'Cottage industry'? I don't know, but it sure looks busy.

Martin came around to see the singles, almost in disbelief at how much 800 looked like. We're both really pleased with it all.

Only one small problem though! Only when we both stepped off the cloud did we realise that we've caused ourselves a packing problem. Once we put the completed package together, the single is very bulky. We can only fit 10 singles and not 25 in to each standard packing box (the paper sleeved singles came in boxes of 25). We'll need more boxes, so hopefully Red Rhino will us help out with this.

At least with a re-press with a cardboard sleeve everything will be so much simpler.

7 July

Band rehearsal tonight, and during the break they did an interview with the Chronicle. I decided to sit in on this one but kept very quiet. The band didn't put their foot in it this time and everyone seemed pleased with the way it went.

Earlier today, I sent off the very first copy of the single. We're a week away from the official release date but I wanted John Peel to have it now. Hope he really likes it, as it would be great to get firstly his seal of approval and secondly, a Radio One session on the strength of it. A lot of hope and pressure is riding on this single to do well. But I guess that's how everyone feels with their first single.

8 July

Alternative Music's final part of the bill arrived in the post. We had a bit of luck due to the cracked metal plates, which had caused the delay, and they'd reduced our bill by cancelling the cost of the test pressing. It all helps.

9 July

Another interview today. This time Party Day was at the office of The Sheffield Star for a lunchtime meeting. I couldn't make it to the meeting as I had to be at work. Martin and Mick did the interview, which was fine by me. As far as I'm concerned, it's not necessary to have all three of them at an interview, but there must be two. Mind you I'd prefer it if one of them was definitely Martin (he does brighten up interviews). I met them afterwards but they wouldn't tell me anything about it, other than it went well. So I'm left in the dark until it's published – how annoying and typical of them.

11 July

We're back up to York today. Just Martin and myself this time, to deliver the first batch of 300 to Red Rhino. They showed us that we're now listed in their release catalogue and are now waiting for the demand.

This is where I come in, as it needs to be promoted. I've already decided to have next week off work, so I can go to London and push our single. My targets are the music press, sympathetic radio shows, to harass a few more promoters and if I've got the time, to try out a few more talent agencies.

For London, I had found some cheap student accommodation that was advertised in the NME. I phoned them earlier today and booked myself in from Monday to Thursday. I'm looking forward to this trip, but this time I'm not sure how to explain my absence from work. I have no holiday left. Have taken loads of unpaid sick leave. I know that my excuses are now wearing a bit thin. Have I pushed my employers too far this time?

We returned from Red Rhino with more packing boxes to fill, courtesy of Red Rhino, and later that night had completed a further 160 singles ready to go.

12 July

Another day off, another excuse. It was a promotion's day. Martin and I visited both Radio Hallam and Radio Sheffield, and then up to Leeds for Radio Aire. We handed in several copies in the various coloured bags at each station. At Radio Aire we met Andy Kershaw, who does the Sunday Alternative Show. He was quite enthusiastic but seemed more interested in the single's multicoloured packaging. So the cloth bag is definitely an eye catcher and could be a winner.

Later that night, Mick told us that the single is already in the main record shop in Barnsley. They must have pre-ordered it, but I did wonder if he'd been in there everyday asking for it. However, it's now out in the open; a few radio stations and potential favoured dj's have a copy, and it's in the shops. It has begun...

13 July

Back at the music shop today to collect Carl's repaired Hi-Watt amplifier. It's taken absolutely ages for them to do it. Unfortunately our cash flow problem is beginning to get in the way of our ambitions. So to help cover the cost of the repair we had already decided to sell our spare amplifier, to the repair shop! However I was still £39.00 down on the total required.

I received a promising letter today from a company called Intermedia. They produce video compilations, and we're interested in selling their wares to us. Think I'll put that to one side for the moment and consider it later.

It's Wednesday today, and we're on the eve of our first major musical weekend, and it'll certainly not be the last:

- Thursday - the gig at La Phonographique for another blistering blinder of a gig (I hope).
- Friday - the day of the single's release and we'll be back in York delivering more copies.
- Saturday - Woodlands Studio to record for Len's Compilation LP.

I'm sure the adrenalin will be on overtime.

14 July - La Phonographique, Leeds

I hired the van to cover the full weekend, and for tonight's gig I'd managed to get the same PA and Lighting hire company that we had the last time for this venue. They were fantastic before, so it's all looking good. Last time here the lights had been so hot at the front of the stage, that at the very least this time each member of the band should have a decent tan.

So far, so good. And let's not forget that in Leeds our gigs always go so smoothly.

This basement/cellar venue has a great atmosphere and an excellent music sound once it's full. It's a shame that this was the only gig I was able to organise for our Single, but I'm sure the band will enjoy it and play well. As I couldn't fit in London this time, there was no point playing a tin pot place for the sake of it. This place is perfect.

Tonight the venue was packed and I was amazed and impressed by the Barnsley contingent as so many of them had made it to the gig... unbelievable. We want more of this. There was such an enjoyable vibe emanating from the stage, which burst onto the wild and packed dance floor. The band we're in top class form. It wasn't a technically perfect gig, but that didn't matter as the atmosphere and music was stunning.

When it came to the encore, I always leave up to the band to decide to do one or not. It may happen or it may not. Tonight there were no such qualms. They loved it and didn't want to leave the stage. They began the encore with a new song called 'Sisters of Mercy', which was then followed by 'Washing Line', our crowd pleaser.

The only downside to the gig was the 'no-shows' that I'd placed on the guest list. Giving credence and breath to so-called important music biz types, who fail to show, whilst still charging friends to come in, makes my blood boil. I was surprised to see (or not see) Red Rhino and Keenan (once again) fail to show. At least we had plenty of fanzines there: Len with his ROAR, Leeds Other Paper and Chicken Wardance. The latter had interviewed Party Day prior to the gig backstage. Even though Chicken Wardance had snubbed us completely at the Leadmill gig, we seem now to be in favour with this Barnsley 'zine. For their next issue they want to deliciously spread the band over several pages. I realise that the Junction 37 connection between both parties can be seen as incestuous, but it'll massage the bands' ego a little (and what the hell), you can never have enough publicity. Later I promised to send the 'zine some new and exclusive photos of the band to go with their feature. So I need to sort out another photo session soon.

Finally, although our take on the door was acceptable, well £25.00, we still lost twice that amount tonight. Oh for a generous publisher!

15 July

If it's gonna happen then why not today. 'Row the Boat Ashore/Poison' was officially released today. It's not that I'm expecting a crowd of Press around our collective front door for this momentous occasion, but today does feel special. I managed to get it mentioned in all the music weeklies in their news section and now it's up to me to interest the reviewers.

After picking up the band, we all helped to empty the van of last night's debris of gear. We then loaded it with the next batch of singles. The drive to York was reasonable and our spirits were high.

Everyone was keen to know of any news that Red Rhino might have for us. Maybe a big order had already gone out. We all thought that Leeds was a big possibility or at least favourite to order some copies. What we didn't expect was to find out that we were 'Big in Belgium'. Well not exactly big, but Red Rhino had sent out 10 requested copies. Most baffling but gratefully received by us. That was the only news they had for us so far. So we went to the nearby pub for a few drinks, some general waffle and a few games of pool. It always feels good to be lazing around when you know that most people are normally working. And yet again I'm absent from work!

Back in Barnsley I picked up a copy of the Chronicle. Our interview had been printed and had taken over the whole of the pop column. It read very favourably too, even though it's not in the interests of the paper to criticise local bands. However, it certainly wasn't an advertorial either.

In the article, Martin was in full flow and verbally rattling on in the search of a full stop, and the Chronicle occasionally provided him with one.

When he was asked what Red Rhino had thought of the single, he replied with "very atmospheric". And with "Why was it on Party Day Records?" he replied, "We're not too bothered about being discovered by a major company. I reckon if we stick with a small label like Party Day, we'll still be in control of what Party Day stands for."

As for the songs themselves, Carl spoke up with "Most of the lyrics I write, happen on the day of its recording. I don't know what it is but they just seem to come to me". And just like most local papers when they're not listing your age, it's your employment status. On Mick and Carl's current situation, Mick had this to say.

"It's more than just a hobby; it's a fulltime job, particularly as Carl and I have no job".

Everyone was out tonight in Barnsley, and all of Party Day are happily basking in their expected glories. I'd told them to take it easy with the drink as our weekend was far from over. They took pity on me and left the safety catch on the collective self-destruct button. There'll be plenty of time for that later.

16 July - Woodlands Studio, Normanton

It's another early start for us. Who said rock'n'rollers never see the light of day. There all ready and waiting by the time I get to pick them up, even Martin - which must be a first. Then it was back to the rehearsal room for the gear and off to Normanton. I still found time to pick up a copy of the Sheffield Star on the way. We'd scored another ace, this time we got the main photo and a fairly large feature, which was very generous to us. Maybe having a summer release was on the right side of 'inspired genius'.

By midday we were busily setting up the gear in the basement for Neil to mike up, so I left them alone to sort it out. Hunger beckoned, so I busied myself with the mundane things. I collected the band's' food order and set off to the nearest bakery for pies and sandwiches galore. Alcohol was off limits, so no-one asked for it.





The day didn't go quite as smooth as I thought it would, as it appeared that we'd got a little problem called egos. There was quite a bit of petty bickering going on between everyone. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised by the rise of these demons, given the events of the last few days, so I just ignored this for now. Anyway we still managed to complete two first rate numbers: 'Rabbit Pie', a delicious piece of pop with a killer guitar line, and the mean and moody 'Athena'. Inspiration was on overtime with 'Athena' and they'd given it a totally new intro sequence courtesy of some spontaneous Radio Four drivel about "women sunbathing on the beach and being made pregnant by the sun, which is pure DH Lawrence"! It was perfect for the mood of the song, and the moment that the radio 'grab' inter cuts with Carl's bass line was pure perfection. It felt like a hot summer's night.

It was a totally brilliant day and a first class effort made by all. Even though the studio time has hammered my pay packet, today comes under the heading of 'Necessity'. And now not only do we have two scorchers in the bag, but at present 'Athena' is a spare track just waiting for the right moment.

Later that night, there was to be no holding back after a restful pint or three. Can't remember the minor things, like details, but I did remember that both Martin and I had stumbled home along the railway line for the full five miles. I could almost see the following day's headline. "Latest Pop Sensation killed in suicide pact". I'd no idea what had happened to the rest.



17 July

Day of rest and do I need it. Tomorrow's London trip will be a very busy time for me. I have the targets and goals in place, and really must come away with at least one gig date arranged, if I'm to keep the publisher interested in us. A publisher could become a saviour. Also we need some Press reviews for the single, which should generate further interest and gigs.

I don't feel at all out of my depth with this work, in fact I'm relishing the challenge. I want to keep up this momentum for the band's sake; they're talented enough and deserve it. And I still don't know what to tell work about the absence.

Postscript: the following week John Peel played 'Row the Boat Ashore' on his programme, for its first national airing.