

sarah newsletter

January 1993 no.2

Christmas Day.

The pudding's on to boil, the lights are lit on the tree, the cat's downstairs in the kitchen playing quietly with its GamePuss and here are we, hard at work putting the finishing touches to the second Sarah Quarterly, a perfect three months after the first. Whatever next, records out on time? Demos listened to as soon as they arrive? Gigs in Wales? A small dry sherry? Bless you.

Not that anybody's been up to too much lately, what with the cold, and Christmas Shopping and all that. Our deluge of Australians has abated slightly as **THE SUGARGLIDERS**, over in November and December, are now sadly departed - not in any glamorous Rock'n'Roll Suicide sense, I hasten to add (despite much prodding by us in our Press Agent hats - rather cute with little fold-down flaps over the ears - maybe you spotted us?), more as in tearful end-of-tour hugs in freezing cold Jericho Tavern carpark etc - though I felt I was looking pretty glamorous, and Josh had grown his beard back so was being quite man-of-the-world and - well, anyhow, they relented slightly in the end and let us lay them down in a couple of muddy holes and throw earth at them for a bit and - incidentally, before I forget, if you were one of those horrified by the insinuation in Melody Maker that The Sugargliders are the wizened old men of fresh-faced pop, could we just point out that, on the night of that review, Josh was 22 and Joel a mere 19 - obviously not entirely young enough to qualify as Riot Grrrl Teen-Art boy-girl rebels but then Huggy Bear (paragraph ends oddly in mid-sentence)

Anyway, you have to grow up early in The Bush. Ask Harvey.* Now - in addition to the various gigs (and thanks to everybody who helped in whatever way, especially Mark from Mrs Kipling and Stewart from Boyracer - new Boyracer EP on Turntable Friend is brilliant, incidentally) - they did some recording while they were here, and there's a new 7"EP out on 15th March called "Ahprrahran" (SARAH 72), recorded at the very fine CAT Studios in Mitcham by the very fine Ian Catt, famous for his work with The Field Mice and St.Etienne. Or "famous for his work with St.Etienne" as the world-at-large would say. They also recorded a couple of songs ("Unkind" and "Beloved") in Derby with Jyoti from White Town, and they'll record a third song - probably "Trumpet" - in Melbourne when they're home, so that'll all come out as another EP in early summer. Incidentally, the "LP" mentioned last time isn't imminent - for the totally admirable reason that Josh doesn't want to record an LP unless it's going to be as good as Orange Juice's "You Can't Hide Your Love Forever". If only more bands had this attitude... or that LP... or a tape of Huggy Bear's Peel Session or the Chia Pet single but that's irrelevant -

Anyway, right now they should be midway home - asleep on a beach in Bali if all's gone according to plan - and I think they'd like us to say thanks possum to everyone who helped make their stay a useful and productive one; and we'd like to say thanks Sugargliders for not minding all the driving up and down motorways to far-flung parts - though I guess "far-flung" has rather different connotations in Australia! In Australia, a farflung is a small winged mammal, rather cute with little fold-down flaps over the ears.

But of course no sooner has one door bolted than the next is off and running, and the **EVEN AS WE SPEAK** advance guard has now arrived from Sydney (we did one of those music-biz power-lunches in a cafe above a chip-shop in Camden Town last Tuesday - we're quite dreadful sometimes), after going missing for three weeks in Thailand. The others arrive by mid-January, and get to work straight away with a gig at The Chocolate Factory people's new venue, The Monarch in Chalk Farm... other dates confirmed so far are (turns page...):

* Harvey lives in Shepherd's Bush. Ha ha ha. Or ho ho ho, since it's Christmas. God, these crackers aren't very funny - pass me my paper hat and plastic aeroplane wrist-watch, let's show these people what time it is -

Jan 19th: LONDON Chalk Farm The Monarch
 Jan 30th: LONDON Rough Trade Covent Garden (lunchtime)
 Jan 30th: READING Rising Sun Institute (suppertime) with **BLUEBOY** [acoustic set]
 Feb 9th: NOTTINGHAM Narrow Boat
 Feb 10th: BRISTOL Louisiana with **BOYRACER**
 Feb 11th: LONDON George Robey
 Feb 12th: TUNBRIDGE WELLS Rumble Club TBC
 Feb 16th: DERBY Wherehouse with The Auteurs TBC
 Feb 17th: LIVERPOOL Planet X
 Feb 18th: BIRMINGHAM Pen & Wig
 Feb 20th: LEEDS Duchess of York with **BOYRACER**
 Feb 21st: HULL Adelphi
 Feb 25th: NORWICH Waterfront
 Feb 26th: HARLOW Square
 Feb 27th: OXFORD Jericho Tavern

with hopefully more dates to be confirmed. And their LP/CD ("Feral Pop Frenzy" - SARAH 614) is out on February 1st, with 17 listed titles - not bad for a mini-LP. And they're recording a second Peel Session on January 31st.

March 29th meanwhile sees the release of "Untouched", debut 8 song mini-LP from **SECRET SHINE** (SARAH 615), and hopefully there'll be gigs too, though line-up changes are afoot due to disappearance of rhythm section, so we don't really know what's going on at the moment. Which is nothing new, I guess. That's preceded on March 8th by a new 7", "Loveblind"/"Way Too High", neither of which songs appear on the LP, of course. Because singles are singles and LPs are LPs (with occasional exceptions e.g. the Even As We Speak LP, because the singles were never available in their native land...).

Incidentally, do you like our new long-range release-forecasts? - all part of Revolver's new 3-Month Release-Schedules, anti-Recession tactics in light of the current economic climate. They've also just merged with APT Distribution (aka ex-Red Rhino, for our older readers) - these are seriously troubled times, and one does indeed have to jive if one wants to survive. Should I become prime-minister in the near future, all this will change.

Also scheduled for March, a new **ORCHIDS**-thing, almost certainly a 6 song mini-LP. No gigs at present though because bassist Moody is still absent, last spotted in a bar somewhere in Sweden (working, I hasten to add, not nuzzling up to some sturdy lumberjack in a smoky dim-lit snug and trying to tell him his life-story). Sorry, glamour again. More bizarrely - there's a new **ACTION PAINTING!** single. What's more, it's our first sub-2 minute A-side since SARAH 7. "Egad!" we cry, slightly louder than we intended, "is there at last a new Spirit of Fresh-Faced POP stalking the land?!" "Bugged if I know," comes the gruff response (I think it's the man over the back), "but I reckon that cat of yours looks bloody silly in that hat - especially with those little fold-down flaps." (The cat has been behaving strangely lately, and has become very self-conscious about its ears. Attempts to pass itself off as a press-agent have failed dismally, as nobody will serve it at the bar. Indeed, it usually gets trodden on and laughed at - "because of my ears" it says. Weird.) Anyway, that's "Classical Music", SARAH 73, a three track EP conceived and recorded in Portsmouth, Glamour Capital of East Hants.

What else - **BLUEBOY** haven't recorded anything new yet, because they're looking for a suitably noisy studio, on the grounds that the LP sounded too restrained, which is possibly true. Probably they'll use the one Heavenly did their early things in, and sometime in January I hope. That'll be a 7"EP, with "Meet Johnny Rave" on one side and Paul's instrumental "Elle" and "Air France" on the other. And they're playing with Even As We Speak at the end of January (see above), before jetting off to Japan in February (Tokyo 23/24, Nagoya 26, Osaka 27 for our Japanese readers, to whom also, konnichi-wa and taco). And a second LP should be recorded in summer, though they now happily seem to want to do another single first - pure pop spirit strikes again.

Still ensconced in a studio north of the border are **THE WAKE**, though I guess they should be nearly done by now - I shall stick in a skewer and see if the juices run clear. And **THE HARVEST MINISTERS** look set to start recording an album and single probably in March; I believe they're gigging in Ireland in February and doing something else in January, though I forget what - I know there was a good reason for the recording being in March, though. They've just done a session for Radio 2 in Ireland - which doesn't mean a lot to us but is apparently quite impressive and glamorous.

God, who else is on this label? Um, **HEAVENLY** are doing some gigs with Lois (ex-Courtney Love - over from The States) in a couple of weeks, which is inconveniently about a week before this will be printed, so that's more annoying than it is interesting, isn't it? Maybe we're just in time for Brighton Concord on Jan 13th and Leeds Royal Park on the 17th? Anyway, they're still around, and they've got some new songs, so we're hoping they'll make us a nice new pop-record sometime soonish. **ANOTHER SUNNY DAY** surprise surprise aren't up to much - as some people have been telling us for years - though Harvey's still Blueboy-ing (boing) of course, which means he has to go to Japan yet again, poor lad. Our Welsh Office meanwhile reports that though **THE SWEETEST ACHE** are still eerily quiet, **THE ROSARIES** were spotted at a Stereolab gig in Bristol a couple of months back, grumbling about the fact that nobody ever plays in Wales. Oh, and I saw one of **TRAMWAY** on Park Street the day before yesterday when I was trying to buy a Christmas tree; I don't know what he was doing, but thankfully nobody was paying him any attention. **GENTLE DESPITE** are still quiet too, but we have our fingers crossed for a new single in 1993. You never know. Or possibly you do - if so, please tell us.

Some sad news: **BRIGHTER** - as some of you may know - did a gig at The Bull & Gate at the start of December which may well have been their last ever (sob sob) on account of bassist Alex deciding to quit (sob sob) in order to devote more time to his family and career (hiccup gurgles) - which, for those who don't know, involves helping design and construct mini-roundabouts in the Chichester area. Sir Christopher Wren once said, when asked what his epitaph should be, "Look around you!" - he was in London at the time, in St.Paul's - the cathedral, not the tube station. And I hope you'll all feel the same about Alex next time you're passing through Chichester - you can easily spot one of Alex's roundabouts, they're the ones where you have to drive through the middle, brake hard, and swerve sharp left at the last moment without looking. What this means for Brighter nobody knows - they may replace him and, heavens, even get a drummer - or they may not; they may keep on recording, or they may not; they may invent a wholly new type of bio-degradable party-hat, or they may not; it's all a bit up in the air at the moment. Fear not though, we shall keep you posted.

And of course as one door falls off its hinges, another one often-as-not thumps you on the elbow and - tara - we have a new band! Well we hope so at least though, what with Christmas posts and transatlantic phonecalls with time-delays and things, we're not quite counting our turkeys, or crossing our bridges before we've burnt them, or even bolting our stable doors before the horse has. Anyway, hopefully we have a new band, and hopefully they're doing three (?) singles soon. They're very very wonderful, come from Queens, New York, and they're called **EAST RIVER PIPE**. Or he is to be precise - well he's not, because it'd be a pretty silly name to have, he's called FM Cornog, which is also pretty silly but not quite as silly as East River Pipe - I'm still worried we're tempting fate by announcing this before everything's signed and sealed, just in case they get snapped up by Warner Brothers or someone in a post-Yuletide binge - but, even if they did, it wouldn't stop the singles being great, so we'd be churlish not to tell you. They've had three out so far - "Axl or Iggy", "My Life Is Wrong" and "Make A Deal With The City", all on Hell Gate Productions of New York. But don't waste your money on expensive imports because hopefully we'll be re-issuing it all... or Mr.Warner will. Or his brother.

You may have noticed no reference so far to SARAH 70 - that's because it's exciting, and we've been saving it till after the mince-pies. It's all to do with politics and (if you'll excuse an old chestnut - but it is that time of year) POP SENSIBILITY. You see - I for one regret every single album we've ever released, not because they're not all as good as "You Can't Hide Your Love Forever" but because we never wanted to release albums, that wasn't the POINT of SARAH. Unfortunately it's impossible, given the way the music-industry exists at present, for us to survive doing just 7"s. But that doesn't mean we should lose sight of what we were trying to do - our political agenda as-it-were - so: flexidiscs, fanzines, board-games, Post-War theme parks - come on down! And SARAH 70 is a fanzine/flexi package - the words are an odd assortment from various sources, the music is a 5½" 45rpm clear vinyl live version of **BLUEBOY's** "Cloud Babies", recorded at The Mean Fiddler Acoustic Room last summer at a gig they shared with The Harvest Ministers.

Now - you may complain that the flexi's just a different version of a previously released song. Which it is, but - sadly, bands always tend to want their best songs on (yuk) "proper" records, and to view flexis as 2nd rate alternatives - as quick cheap publicity, or stop-gaps until they can get round to releasing it "properly". Either that or as a dumping-ground for the songs nobody especially wants on the "real" records - "oh, OK, we'll let you use this on your flexi/compilation-tape because we're never going to do anything else with it because all our other songs are better, now leave us alone" - which makes it all pretty pointless and crap. Whereas we've always wanted flexidiscs to be used **POSITIVELY** for what they are - a uniquely perfect medium for certain things you'd never consider releasing on hard vinyl, not because they're sub-standard but because it would miss the whole point, the whole essence of the thing. And the plan now is to do flexis that are souvenirs of special pop moments - one gig or one song or one half-minute that just made you go WOW... And "Cloud Babies" seemed a good place to start - just because it was a wonderful 2½ minutes in anybody's life... or would've been if anybody had been there. Sigh.

As for the "proper" singles - all 7"s will henceforth appear in wraparound sleeves and polythene bags, just like they used to... AND there will also be a CD version of each, but NOT featuring anything that isn't available on vinyl - though sometimes (notably 2-track 7"s) we might add songs previously released elsewhere, e.g. the CD version of Secret Shine's new 7" will include "Honeysweet" from the previous 7" - because it was fab and not enough people noticed. What you won't get with the CD singles, of course, is the useful and informative insert - but I reckon for an SAE we could supply you with one... or you could just buy the 7"?

On the stock-check front: SARAH 17 (**GOLDEN DAWN**, "George Hamilton's Dad"), SARAH 18 (**THE FIELD MICE**, "Sensitive") and SARAH 28 (**ACTION PAINTING!**, "These Things Happen") have now joined the ranks of the dear-departed and much-missed, and the **HEAVENLY** badges have all gone too. On the plus side, both **BRIGHTER** and **BLUEBOY** now have T-shirts available, and **EVEN AS WE SPEAK** ones will probably happen for the tour.

And that's the end of No.2. If you want to receive the next one, an SAE will do the trick, or £1 will secure you the NEXT FOUR plus a place on our mailing-list which may mean you get the odd occasional extra too... (make that £1.50 and £2.50 for Europe and the Rest of the World respectively). And for a complete mail-order list, other queries etc. please don't - hesitate. Oh - the flexi/fanzine package (SARAH 70) is 50p by the way.

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