

*I think I found something I think I was
looking for, I think I found it and besides
I found a little bit more*

Toulouse Saturday 21st May 1994.
Matabiau station, 9.45am. 8 hours from Austerlitz,
settling back into my corner seat, yawning and
wishing I'd brought more food to eat and then
suddenly smiling, suddenly remembering last
night at Le Bikini, and Mark walking onstage in
that shabby old priest's robe he'd bought in the
market that afternoon, striding on, palms upraised,
blessing the crowd. Wraparounds, fag dangling
from the corner of his mouth, oh I wish I had a
photo, in my head it's a beautiful photo and look -

- that's me in the corner, the stupid dozy-
looking one, just come across from St. Etienne the
long way via Marseille because suddenly it'd struck
me I'd managed to get this old without ever seeing
the Mediterranean - yeah that's me... in my corner...
eyes closing...

... train jerking, shaking my shoulder, come
on then, sleepyhead, wake up and tell us what
you're thinking. Mmmmmmm??? Oh... just stuff...
you know. Nice stuff, mostly. Tram-lines. Coal-
mines. A hill-top Madonna made out of concrete
and steel and a whole city spread out below.
Scruffy brown-skinned kids who point at me and
shout out "Allemand!" as we wander back down
through the edge of town estates. A goodbye kiss
in the 5am silence, she naked, soft and still warm
from bed, coming to the door of her room to watch
me go. A leaden walk through the sleeping streets
to the lights of Chateaucieux; feeling emptied, a bit
sick, a million other things... yeah. That sort of

stuff. A lump of stolen coal at the back of my
rucksack, a keepsake. St. Chamond. Rive-de-Gier.
Changing trains in Lyon's harsh anaemic dawn.
South south south, bleary fields on either side
ripening into colour and suddenly there are
vineyards. And then Marseille, scorched into my
memory now and forevermore as a flight of white
steps ablaze in the hard noon sun and me running
down them with just 40 minutes to get to the
harbour and back before the next train leaves, the
long slow sticky train back west along the coast and
inland to Carcassonne and rush-hour Toulouse
where I'll waste half an hour trying to understand
the ticket machines on its fabulous shiny metro...

And now it's tomorrow, and I'm on another
train, but heading north now, to Paris, Dieppe, and
the boat home. I need to sleep. I need to eat. I need
to...

Four rows down, across the seat backs, I see
her: coal-eyed, Mediterranean, black hair pushed
back over one shoulder. She smiles. I smile. She
smiles again, looks away, then back, and we smile.
I press my face against the glass and watch the
forest falling away and when I look back she smiles
again. And so on and so on. There's something
electric about today. The air is sapphire. In love
with the whole fucking world. Longer looks now.
Daring. Defying. Holding my gaze. Look away,
look back, knowing she's waiting and that in a
second she'll look up again and smile. On and on.
Why don't I know the French for any of these
thoughts? How many miles have we travelled like
this? What's the name of this town? Then at Brive-
la-Gaillarde she suddenly rises, picks up her
raincoat and leaves - just a glance back through the

window as she walks along the platform, close against the side of the train. Other futures shine like stars in other people's eyes, we glimpse them and blink them away. We move on, we move on. Towns whose names I've never known. People come and go. Across the huge flat empty fields north of Orléans it begins to rain, soft sobs of rain that I want to go on forever.

Killing time on the Place de Clichy, I buy Burger King coffee and a warm filled-baguette from a stall. The air's like sticky leaves against my face and sweet with the smoke of distant summers. There is traffic somewhere very close I know but I don't see it, it's just a dim noise. Figures babble past me; my footsteps make no sound. I walk for miles, my head is hollow, I'm drunk on something exquisite that I don't remember drinking and I love the smell of Paris in the evening. Maybe I'll just stop here, let go, become part of the sad little clutter of lives that fills up these deep-walled alleys behind Pigalle, because it wouldn't really matter, would it, not really.

Breathe in. Oh breathe in.

On the boat-train the heating's jammed full-on - people haul the big half-windows down as far as they'll go and lean out laughing. We move on through the suburbs, and the carriage fills with the night-honed sounds and scents of the Paris night. I think this may have been the best day of my life. It has nothing much to do with popmusic, I suppose.

I couldn't see the bottom of the glass till closing time

The King's Arms, Bristol, Tuesday 21st May, 1991. I forget when exactly it was Stuart from Hope remembered that the only reason their previous gig here had been OK was that they broke into the noise-limiter and rigged it... I just wish he'd remembered before we booked *this* gig, or at least while we still had a chance to do likewise, because now it's obviously been re-set and The Orchids are NOT having fun... all five stare grimly at the little red light... you get 10 seconds grace once it comes on, 10 seconds to quieten things down before the power goes off... Ha, quieten things down!!! Chris is already playing with brushes instead of drumsticks, and even Brighter kept cutting out. Oh Christ, we shouldn't even be *doing* this fucking gig, it's only because The Fleece lost their licence and we had to take over at the last minute... and now I'm dying every time I see Hackett roll his eyes up to the ceiling in despair...

... and in the end I just get so embarrassed by the whole fiasco and by the fact we've charged people three quid to get in that I just think fuck it and get horribly drunk. And afterwards... oh, fuck knows... I guess everybody must've gone home, and I seem to remember Pete-next-door trying to climb out our back-window... and The Orchids wanting to buy some dope, and me sending them down to St. Pauls, only they couldn't find any, and then when the taxi brought them home they bought it off the driver instead. Yeah. Next time they brought their own down from Glasgow and The Sweetest Ache smoked it.

Up to Leeds, drunk again

In the toilets two girls are doing their make-up and saying "I think they're supposed to sound a bit like The Lightning Seeds." The Royal Hotel, Waterfoot, near Rawtenstall - the mill-town valleys south of Blackburn, August '89, and The Field Mice's first gigs as a three-piece. Afterwards the band goes back to Jo's and we spend the night in a sleeping-bag above a disused railway tunnel with an umbrella to keep the rain off. When we wake up, we're surrounded by slugs. 6.53am bus into Manchester and a good greasy all-day breakfast in one of those cheap caffs just up from Piccadilly Gardens.

One year later and there's six of us squashed into Michael's dad's Sierra because we've picked up Catherine in Manchester - even though I'm the only one who knows who she is. We'd stayed over at Mark St. Christopher's after the Boardwalk gig - the one where we first met Gentle Despite and they did "Interstellar Overdrive" because their drummer had only agreed to play on condition they did - and next morning Michael said "Why not come with us?" so she did. She shows us the ASDA in Ashton-Under-Lyne where Clint Inspiral does his shopping (and where we buy French bread and cheese and crisps) and the place on Saddleworth Moor where Brady and Hindley dug their graves (and where we have our picnic).

That night at the Royal Park in Leeds everyone sits on the floor while St. Christopher play so Glenn wanders out amongst them with his microphone, cabaret-style. Las Vegas here we come! Or Hull Adelphi, actually, but only after

lunch in Grassington and an afternoon in York Minster.

The Adelphi, Degrey Street, first left off Beverley Road after the railway bridge heading north; an end-terrace with a piece of waste-ground to the left that serves as a car-park and a railway line out the back. I'm flu-ish and drinking vodka, huddling in my jumper and Bobby's jacket. A boy perched on a table outside the toilets psyches himself up for hours to sell a fanzine for the first time and then picks on me, the one person in the whole place who's got it already; I say you must be Eddie and later, when the bands have finished, he offers me a there-and-then night-time tour of Hull. But instead I slump in the back-seat on the drive back to London, then toss and turn on the futon in Harvey's old flat off Goldhawk Road until day, saving night-time Hull for a few years later, one time after Boyracer play, when we follow the railway line into East Hull in the rain and explore the ghostly docks and chemical works in the early hours.

Then you remind me of laughing

First Sarah Festival in Paris in January 1990. It was at the New Morning and organised by Naji Baz, an advertising executive who knew nothing really about the French music industry but who loved Sarah and knew that he wanted to organise a festival and to publicise it with a full page advert in Les Cahiers Du Cinema, France's most respected

film magazine; I think we had the back cover in the end. He was away shooting a commercial in Africa just beforehand, and organising things was hell, but finally it all came together and us, The Field Mice, The Orchids, St. Christopher and Harvey all made it over. The night we arrived there was a party for us at his flat, a huge place full of books and pictures with vast sofas for us to sink into, and there we were, all nervously clutching the cans of McEwans we'd taken with us, while him and his friends rushed round producing bottles of wine, plates of pâté, cold meat, pickles... Next day at the soundcheck we arrived to find him with a huge grin on his face playing air guitar to "Caveman" - turning and seeing us watching he laughed and said "I love this song!" The Field Mice opened with "Triangle", which was called "3D" then and seemed to last forever, never quite completely falling apart. Chris Orchid drummed on "Sensitive" and was it maybe the first time we heard "Something For The Longing"? All twenty or so of us crammed in The Orchids' van back to the hotel, I was perched halfway on an amp, halfway on someone's head, and then The Orchids had a party and ended up getting trapped in their room, forcing the lock... and I got hauled out of bed at three in the morning to translate drunk Glaswegian into French and back. Next morning we were surveying the damage when a mad chambermaid appeared and wanted to throw all of The Orchids' things out of the window into the courtyard below, and we spent half an hour or so trying to calm her down and helping clear up the mess.

A six am soundcheck at La Locomotive eighteen months later, everyone half asleep and

drinking endless coffee, I guess we went along for moral support. This was The Wake, Heavenly and The Orchids. And that night, high on a huge stage, smoke billowed, the curtain flew back and, as The Orchids hit the first chord of "Something For The Longing", Scally took a synchronised leap from the top of his monitor and I caught a glimpse of Rob Heavenly over to one side, grinning stupidly. This is how it should always be, this is pop music, for these five minutes, the most important thing in the world. A day or so later we paid Heavenly over breakfast in Montparnasse in bundles of francs before going back to the hotel to pay off The Orchids' phonebill - they'd rung all of their friends in Glasgow and then done an early morning runner, leaving Heavenly to be threatened with the police.

*This could be the start of something big
Or something nothing much at all*

Hearing the demo of "Sunflower" for the first time, late one evening in our tiny windowless kitchen in Upper Belgrave Road, not daring to breathe in case the air snapped. Sitting down to write Ric a letter. Feeling smug and happy and knowing this is the best damn label in the whole damn world. Oh yes indeed. And then suddenly on Sunday Martin Subway is on Radio Bristol saying "I've just signed this great new band from Illinois" and we're screaming, shouting, running out to the phone-box on Blackboy Hill and dialling America and - it's all right, it's all right, everything's OK. Martin's signed Choo Choo

Train, we've got The Springfields - same people, different names. Different sides of the same demo. Walking back uphill, stars bouncing in our heads, we wonder about maybe getting a phone put in.

When we first wrote to Revolver asking for distribution, we never heard back, so in the end we went out to the phone-box and rang them. "We couldn't get back to you," they said, "you didn't give us a phone number." So we explain about phone-lines and landlords and so on and go down to meet them and Mike says I hope you're not going to put them in bloody plastic bags like Subway and... duh... but he gives us the deal, and lends us the money to press "Pristine Christine", and we wander off happily into Broadmead to buy a cake to celebrate but can't find any nice ones.

"Shadow Factory" was our first record with a barcode (it doesn't work, of course, because it's printed in pink...) and on the sleeve we dedicated it to Chris in Poynton because he'd said he'd give up buying our records if they ever had barcodes on them. Later he sent us a demo of the band he had at school called The Purple Tulips who had a singer called Annemari who later wrote to The Field Mice and said she'd heard they were looking for an extra vocalist because someone called Violet or 'M' (he kept changing his mind) who once passed through our flat on his way to Europe or somewhere had told her.

"Shadow Factory" was also our first "proper" sleeve. We stuck the colour proof of it on the kitchen wall because we thought it was the most beautiful thing we'd ever seen - which is weird, because it's actually bloody awful, though the sleeve-notes are good. Someone from a different planet once asked us if it was expensive to get it

typeset like that with all the letters scrambled up and not in straight lines. Hah. SARAH 49 was the first sleeve to be typeset, not Letrasetted. Doing "Temple Cloud" and "Coastal" must've taken 10 years off my eyesight.

If you take that "Shadow Factory" sleeve and stand on Bristol Bridge and look at the view it's really strange because it's no longer there - all the old warehouses along Buchanan's Wharf have been wiped away and new offices-blocks and waterfront flats with fiddly little balconies and fancy metal sculptures have taken their place. Last week the scaffolding went up round the Yeo Valley Farms warehouse on Redcliffe Back, the most beautiful building in Bristol, especially at sunset when the red brick glows like a beaten copper hearth.

Pull me in to your heaven-scented world

Through the night for two nights at Vons in Islington, 10pm to 10am - but we start late because Peter's dad's van broke down just after they crossed the Severn Bridge, and they had to hire a new one in Chipping Sodbury. Somewhere round 5am the engineer yawns and wipes Louise's vocal by mistake... we drag her back from her sleepy heap and tell her to do it again. "Tell Me How It Feels" will always for me be the sound of a band dissolving into slurred tumbledown sleepiness... Simon's voice just cracking, and that missed snare-beat at the end... (The Sweetest Ache: "If I Could Shine"/"Tell Me How It Feels")

*Take me where you've been
Show me those things that you have seen*

A scrap of paper with an address on in handwriting that I'll recognise for the rest of my life. Where were we, King's Heath, I think, huddled round a gas-fire probably, late '86 or early '87. My friend Matthew was at university in Birmingham and had seen The Sea Urchins play and Jamie, the singer, was in the year below, my age, doing geography I think. Matthew had them play with his band, Friends Of The Family, November '86 it would have been, some student thing. And I came up from Bristol for it, loved them, met Jamie, later got his address on that little scrap of paper, wrote to him, got letters back, and then released a flexi, "Cling Film", with the last issue of "Kvatch", my old fanzine. That was their first release, closely followed by "Summershine" on Sha-la-la, the flexi-label that Matt used to co-run. There was some tale of them playing The Thekla just before I moved to Bristol, some mad drunk friend with them who stripped during their set to reveal a pair of grubby greyed Y-fronts - twice. The Sea Urchins. We originally wanted "Pristine Christine" to have four songs on; I think the fourth would have been "Show Your Colours", which eventually became "A Morning Odyssey" and a single in its own right. We hitched up to the mixing of "Pristine Christine" at Rich Bitch in Selly Oak - got a lift off a man who'd driven all the way from Plymouth and hadn't had any sleep the night before. We got dropped off in Redditch, found a bus, ate our sandwiches on the platform of Selly Oak station and then walked down to the studio to

meet the band, recognising them from their photos on Mighty Mighty sleeves - Robert on "Is There Anyone Out There?" and Bridget on "Everybody Knows The Monkey" - and found Jamie perplexing the engineer by asking for his vocals "more swirly." Next time we hitched there was for a gig at Sinatras, got dropped off in Solihull this time I seem to remember, not sure if this was the gig with the 14 Iced Bears or not, when Sue got on stage midway through The Sea Urchins' set and started thumping Robert; I think she thought the drum-kit they were trashing was the Iced Bears', but it wasn't. We were supposed to be picking up the "Pristine Christine" master tape, only Jamie kept tipping out his bag and couldn't seem to find it; it never occurred to me until the other day that he was probably just winding us up.

I always love the way you can see into the top deck of passing buses from the windows at Sinatras - like I love watching the trains crawl past on the viaduct between Piccadilly and Oxford Road from the window of The Swinging Sporrán. Ah me. Maybe I fall in love too easily. Or maybe I've just been to too many soundchecks.

The first ever Sarah Night, The Sea Urchins and Poppyheads at The Tropic with The Groove Farm headlining, Friday October 30th 1987. Harvey came up from Penzance, our second meeting, the first having been at Harper's Bazaar for Primal Scream that summer, when Rob Poppyhead had a passport photo to recognise him by. The Sea Urchins' van broke down so they all had to get the coach, and afterwards we turned pied piper and led them back to our flat two miles

away at three in the morning, them and lots of their friends, making it thirteen in all, all strung out in a line behind us along Redland Road. They spent the night in the kitchen and lined up two-by-two along that long cold passageway we had; I always felt embarrassed about that.

Someone wrote to us last week and said he'd had his first kiss to "Pristine Christine" and somehow I just can't deal with the enormity of that. I mean, I was there at the recording and I saw them do it live and at soundchecks and I've got the original demo and, well, I even released the fucking thing, but somehow, somehow, how much nicer, how much more romantic, how much more perfect it would've been to have had it as the soundtrack to something as important as your first kiss.

Another late night back from the other side of the world, it's been a long long day

It's the middle of the afternoon and I'm crouched in a small dark room backstage, I've got my arm around her shoulders and I'm holding her hand to stop it trembling. Blood oozes unhappily down the side of her head. The woman with us tears off a clean piece of cotton-wool, sighs, and murmurs something in French. L'hôpital? Ah oui...

They were still setting up the PA, you see, which meant it wouldn't be Brighter's turn for ages, so we'd been upstairs exploring and - everywhere there are these stupid sculptures, decorations for the night ahead, and Alison leant back and

smashed into some stray bit of gantry - that's all, nothing too rock 'n' roll but... split heads are split heads, and somehow you never bother with insurance when it's just a day-trip, do you? You just use your common sense, you weigh up the costs, you just don't allow for people wanting to make sculptures of Napoleon out of scrap metal and then hang them at head height, do you?

Or, for that matter, for a doctor who stitches you back together and then tells you not to worry about the money because the radio station are paying but if you *could* just see your way to putting him on the guest-list...

A day-trip, to Switzerland, to Lausanne, with its wonderful subterranean funicular - which was pretty much all we saw, to be honest. September 20th, 1990, La Nuit Pop de Sarah. Sponsored by Marlborough, so free cigarettes when you come in the door. The kids launch into a pogo when Brighter start playing then stop when they realise you can't pogo to "Inside Out" and start to drift away... What on earth are we doing here, nobody's heard of us, even the commemorative t-shirt's got Brighter spelt wrong... By the time we reach The Field Mice's final song, which is actually Harvey doing "You Should All Be Murdered" with Mathew Heavenly in his "another fucking harvey band" t-shirt on drums, everybody's downstairs in the disco.

And then when it's all over we all get driven off to different parts of the city to be dumped in the flats of complete strangers. I go with Keris and Alison and Francesca, who's come across from Italy. We don't know where we are or whose flat this is, or why he or she isn't here. The furniture's all made of metal and glass and there are portfolios

of b/w photos scattered around. Of the owner? I guess so... maybe he's an actor then... or a model... or? Oh, who knows.

Next morning, no-one comes to fetch us - the train to the airport's at ten and we've got no tickets and no money and no clue where we are or where anyone else is. This is brilliant. We go to the end of the street to see if we can see any signposts. "Centreville". OK, that'll do, we'll walk it.

And then of course when we finally get to the station, the guy who's got the tickets isn't there. But the clock ticks on, so we troop on through regardless and, as the train for Geneva pulls in at one end of the platform, he comes running up the steps at the other, tickets in hand, waving and grinning. So... all that's left now is to see if we can get through Airport Security without them insisting we make Brighter's drum-machine play a couple of quick numbers to prove it isn't a bomb honest like they did on the way over... those x-ray machines don't seem to like things with timing-devices...

On the plane home I've got the worst hangover in the world and Mark Fieldmouse is telling rock 'n' roll stories about last night at top volume and Amelia's trying to shush him because the whole plane can hear, and then he goes walking up and down the aisle offering sweets to the fourteen of us dotted all over the place, and everybody's just staring at him. And I'm slumped in my seat thinking about the four hour coach journey back from Gatwick still waiting for us once this fucking thing lands...

*If the sun going down can make me cry
Why should I not like the way I am?*

Sitting on Norbury station at dusk waiting for the next train to Victoria I'm thinking this record is going to change so many people's lives. Ha, Ian's face when we told him to turn the guitars up *even more...* I really did think he was going to refuse. Five different tracks of distorted guitar and it's only an eight-track studio; to stop it we just turn the multitrack off.

Next day, Nina comes straight from work and adds her vocal to "When Morning Comes To Town" - first time she's ever sung in front of anybody, and we hardly give her time to get her coat off. "Sensitive" is Single of the Month in *Les Inrockuptibles*, the big glossy French music magazine, with six members of staff signing the review. Things like this just don't happen in England...

*When I dug that knife in his neck
God I swear I was only fooling*

That first Sarah Night at the Fleece, when we tried to do four bands forgetting Sundays have a half-ten finish and though The Sea Urchins were nice enough to step in for The Field Mice at the last minute because Michael couldn't make it, they wanted forty-five minutes, and The Field Mice were still doing it as well, but as an acoustic duo of Bobby and Harvey. It was Brighter's first ever gig, on first at eight o'clock, and St. Christopher were

playing too. The Sweetest Ache came over from Swansea and gave us a demo of "If I Could Shine" and Amelia and Pete came from Oxford, which had been Jamie's condition for playing, and he wanted to be introduced. Action Painting! were there to see St. Christopher and were speeding and heckling The Sea Urchins with "you used to be good once," until finally Patrick had had enough and got out from behind his drums as Lee pushed forwards in the crowd and I leapt in to separate them. I never did find out whose blood it was on my new t-shirt, but it wasn't mine. Someone sent us a live tape after, and you can hear Andrew Groove Farm at the back going "ooh, it's a fight." The Sea Urchins got back on stage and carried on, still playing when the lights were full-on and people were streaming home, Jamie demanding "even if you don't like our music, you've got to admire our clothes. Go on" - but when I paid them afterwards they flung their money in the gutter saying they didn't deserve it; and then they came round to our flat just as we were going to bed because they couldn't afford the petrol home.

Much later, The Sweetest Ache and Delta (ex-Sea Urchins) were double-booked at The Swinging Sporrin in Manchester - both had been told they were headlining and another half dozen bands were supposed to be playing too. Things seemed to get sort of sorted out and I was having dinner when the trouble started, so I never did find out exactly what happened, but I know The Sweetest Ache packed their stuff to leave without playing and I heard Delta get switched off mid-song and I saw Hugh from Mighty Mighty catch that fist.

Big blue marble straight between the eyes

Three borrowed guitars but only one of them works, and Andy a bundle of nerves, stringing his in the wrong order and hoping no-one will notice, then leaving to go to the pub to get drunk rather than stick around for the mixing... they failed their exams so they formed a band, "We want basically to be a sunshine death harvest of guitars" and oh they were, they were... (Action Painting!: "These Things Happen")

Big dog tied up outside supermarket; xenophobic old man waiting for a fight, slightly pissed

Weird fucking day. We've been at Ian's since ten, recording "Noah's Ark", and I really just want to sleep, but Frédéric Delahais from Midnight Music wants to see us to discuss some sort of deal for France so we guess we'd better and traipse up to Camden to meet him in The World's End only it's too noisy and full in there so we shift over the road to another pub where the walls are covered in pictures of boxers and there's a DJ in the corner playing Golden Oldies, "What Becomes Of The Broken Hearted" is one I remember, and we sit down with drinks and start to talk a-n-d t-h-e-n suddenly someone's ringing a bell and speaking, gruffly, clumsily above the noise, "Ladies and Gentlemen, as a mark of respect for Sugar Ray, a fighter and a gentleman, one minute's silence,

everyone up on your feet now PLEASE!" - and everyone rises and the whole pub goes dead silent except Fred who's looking about blankly but still talking because he doesn't understand what's happening here and people are staring and I will him to shush but he won't - and then someone starts ringing the last-orders bell, slow steady beats, ringing out poor dead Sugar Ray Robinson and... no, we can't sit down, not yet, there's more, more to come: "Ladies and Gentlemen, one more thing, at 9 o'clock this evening the news from Hillsborough was 93 dead; ladies and gentlemen, one minute's silence again, PLEASE!" And the pub goes quiet again but me, I just get that word DEAD echoing in my head, "dead", "DEAD"? 93 people don't just DIE... please... TELL ME... we've been stuck in the studio all fucking day, I'm drink-blurred and tired-eyed and I don't understand what this man's saying, 93 people have been killed, is that right, by - killed by what? By people? At a football match? Is this what people do these days? Black and white torsos lurch from the walls, jab jab at my eyes, cheaply framed heroes, fists upraised, and suddenly it feels like I must've messed up badly somewhere along the line to get myself trapped in this place, like Noah's Ark has left without me.

Next night we're at The Falcon seeing oh fuck knows who and Mark Fieldmouse (only then he's just Mark from Balham or sometimes Mark from Syndrome) points to the name Heavenly on a poster for the day after and says they used to be Talulah Gosh, you should be here for that. So we go along and we tell them we'd like to do a record with them and Amelia says "don't you think you ought to hear what we sound like first?" That was

Heavenly's second ever gig, supporting the TVPs, and I remember them doing "Shallow" and "I Fell In Love Last Night" and writing to them next day to say those were our favourites. Next time they played The Falcon Mark was there again, shouting at Amelia to get her ankle-socks off, which later turned up as the opening sentence of the Melody Maker review...

*But when you, when you grew up
You grew up and forgot what's real
What's precious, not precocious
How being in love with life feels*

The Old Malt House, Little Ann Street, Revolver's old place, hammering on the door to get in because the music was always so loud... dialling 540004 from call-boxes on Blackboy Hill, and getting a letter that read "SARAH 2 HERE NOW!" after we hadn't rung up for a while, and Mike saying he'd passed us on Newfoundland Road trying to hitch to London but hadn't liked to stop and tell us because we'd probably have got our hopes up and leapt in his car with all our bags before he'd had a chance to get the words out... getting told if we did our mini-albums on 10" we couldn't possibly sell more than a thousand and getting begged to put a band-name or something on the front of "Snowball"... up all night sleeving SARAH 2, it was so urgent to get it down the warehouse first thing, only then we overslept, and somewhere in the middle of it all I stopped being a teenager... sitting in that 10'x10' unit we rented in

Kingswood, sitting there for a whole week, just me, sleeping 3000 each of SARAHs 26, 27 and 28 and Jesus Christ it was sealed sleeves after that...

Laidley - Allison - Carey - Longmire...
GOAL!

November 1992. Spotting The Sugargliders at the coach station straight off because they were the only ones in shorts. I always think of them sitting round our kitchen table with the cat, of me crashing the car on the way up to see them play in Camberwell with Secret Shine and Blueboy, and of Josh dashing to catch the coach to Bristol to play us "Ahprahran" the minute they'd recorded it at Ian's...

*Trains blue and pearl-grey take you away
from no-one*

At The Adelphi in Preston I get cornered and shouted at by a guy from Action Records who says I'm putting him out of business by selling Heavenly LPs too cheap. Then later, out exploring the town-centre just as the pubs and clubs start kicking out, I get to thinking hmmm, maybe this isn't so wise, not the way my float-tin jangles... so I walk down to the station, buy chocolate from a machine, and sit there in the dark under that wonderful high roof listening to the hiss and clang

of the night-time station and waiting for the 3am train through to Manchester Airport with its 24 hour café and 24 hour comfy benches... but when I get there I'm not really tired and I don't want to get trapped into talking with the handful of people lolling about drinking coffee so I wander off and explore all the closed-up shops and passageways and wonder why British Midland are listing flights to the North Pole and I get on smiling terms with the cleaners. Next morning I'm up bright and early writing postcards outside McDonalds in Arrivals, then it's back upstairs for breakfast and an idle Sunday morning spent watching the planes take off and land through glass mostly totally awash now with rain and gradually I begin to feel like I'm in a documentary, 24 hours in the life of an airport or something.

I remember that Heavenly tour as a tour of rainbows - everywhere I went, there seemed to be rainbows. Squatting on the office floor, sorting out stuff to take with me to sell, I glance up and there, through the window... or, hours later, my rucksack now loaded with records, I'm walking up through Balsall Heath to the Jug Of Ale, checking out the all-night cafés in case I get stranded now they've withdrawn the last train back from New Street - and suddenly the sun breaks out and, over to my left towards Digbeth or Bordesley or wherever, the sky shimmers and hardens into two perfect bands of colour. I look for someone to share it with but I'm alone on a long straight road and anyway it's already fading, puddles beginning to bounce with raindrops.

Next day, looking down from St. Wooloo's high above Newport, there's another, full-colour

printed on a huge cyan sky over Llanwern steelworks, with the sea beyond. And if you run back down into town and crouch really low on the pavement, you can make its arch fit the curl of that sculpture by the bridge opposite the castle.

*Made a steeple with your fingers
Made a cradle with a piece of string
Made a wigwam, made a tree-house
Made a game of everything*

On Friday 19th July 1991 we drive to a trading estate in Park Royal to collect 1000 brightly coloured 16mm dice to go inside copies of SAROPOLY - you wouldn't believe how hard it was to find a supplier - Bristol toy-shops would only sell them singly. They come in five big sweet-jars with Augenwürfel written on the side and are gorgeous things, real wood... you can bury your fingers in them and scoop them up and smell them...

*Secret lovers, blood brothers
Don't you give the game away*

Keith's birthday last year, eight am cross-channel ferry home, eleven of us crammed round a breakfast table, high as hell after a through-the-night mad dash drive that had us catch the boat with literally minutes to spare, knowing there were eight hours till the next one and everyone had jobs

to go to. So here we all are with birthday cake, re-living that hellish last bit where we had to wait for the car to catch the minibus up, and the speed he must have driven at, he was that far behind, and all of us squashing into the minibus on each other's knees to board the ferry, hungover, exhausted, happy, hey, we're all here. Re-living last night in Vannes - end of tour, birthday, free beer, Keith kissing Paul on stage during "Clearer", with lipstick lips on his neck and thick black eyeliner, and Gemma upsetting serious Frenchboys doing interviews with me after the gig by bringing me beer and snogging me intermittently, and they wrote a few weeks later saying "I think you were a bit drunk that night..."

I'm a sentimental fool but I don't care

Having lunch with Even As We Speak in the BBC canteen the day they recorded their first Peel session, watching The Gulf War TV news with them and them worrying about flights home. First meeting them at The Pop Club one January. Saying goodbye at The Falcon one July, the time I knelt on the floor in shorts to write out a poster and stood up to find blood dripping from a myriad of cuts on my knees and their manager wanted to take me for a tetanus jab.

*From a letter at summer's start that the
beginning marked to the night that was our
last took four months and one half*

*Dark city club where we used to meet
You were in the band - knocked me off my feet*

The Field Mice's first gig was at The Apple Orchard in Brighton on January 22nd 1989, but we went instead to Bradford-On-Avon for the day; Brighton was too far, too complicated, too expensive. We had lunch in Bath and got the photo of the bridge with the smiling face on it for the cover to SARAH 14. We made it to their second gig though, supporting The Inspirial Carpets at Exeter University, when they couldn't see to work the drum-machine and ended up with the house-lights full-on - and then taking a torch to all their gigs ever after. At the end Bobby threw down his guitar in dramatic disgust, which he didn't do again until that last tour got as far as Brighton, when he hurled it at the drums with such force it snapped in two; it still hasn't been replaced. Their third gig was in Southampton, when they were supposed to be supporting The Sea Urchins, only The Sea Urchins didn't turn up, which left The Field Mice to headline with a set of only six songs. And their fourth was in Cardiff at The Venue; we held umbrellas while they changed the wheel of Michael's dad's car round the corner from our flat in pouring rain before driving off to meet the promoter outside Furnitureland on a trading estate on the outskirts of town.

*There are so many moments from when we were
together that I, that I do treasure*

Hampstead Heath summer 1990 and I had hayfever. A Saturday, early evening. That whole summer it seemed to be so hot. In France last year we argued about whether the first time we met was September 10th or 12th 1988 and he was right, I still have the travelcard and I checked. Ringing the doorbell in Mitcham, not knowing if they'd turn out to be fifteen or fifty... in the end they were twenty-two, which seemed about right. Two of them back then, old school friends: Bobby, who wrote all the songs, on guitar and vocals, and Michael on bass. So, we met them and we met the dog and the cats and all the family and heard about the recently deceased duck that Bobby's dad found on his way home from the pub one night; it used to sit on Bobby's shoulder apparently. All those songs were recorded at Ian's, a terrace-house round the corner over towards the common: vocals in the box room, everything else in the front bedroom, no drums allowed and you had to stop singing when Ian's dad wanted to mow the lawn. Ian charged £50 a day back then, before Bobby and Michael introduced him to an embryonic St. Etienne. Four songs in a day, only we used the demo version of "Emma's House" in the end, with its even cheaper drum-machine and Bobby with a cold; it had more heart somehow. Paul Robinson, a sailor from Manchester with the tiniest neatest handwriting in the world and an irritating habit of only ever putting his address on his first letter, wrote to check it was "why do I call it Emma's House" (if Emma's House is empty) and not "why do I call at Emma's House" - he always did know what was important.

I remember that first phonecall from the flat at number 46 to check directions or trains or something, and endless long calls from number 45 and from the office in Kingswood, and wilting at bus-stops in Croydon after days out at the sea, coach-stations, train-stations, beaches, parks, a café in Weston-Super-Mare in the cold in autumn, shivering, and upstairs at the front of a double-decker home. There were two consecutive nights at the Pop Club in October 1990 just between the end of The Field Mice's first proper tour and them flying to Japan, when we packed the place out with The Sea Urchins, Sweetest Ache and Field Mice one night and The Orchids, The Wake and St. Christopher the next, and I got dragged to crouch in a stairway with the promoter to be handed great fistfuls of notes in halfheart and secret.

Don't you go thinking I never did love you

That last tour, we seemed to get through about half the dates before we even talked to the band. Two badly promoted awful student gigs, Liverpool and Bath, when they spent about three hours soundchecking the disco and about ten minutes soundchecking the band, and put posters up in all the student halls, but not in the local record shops. Something at the Camden Palace that they did just for the money. Birmingham Barrel Organ, when we arrived late, set up our merchandise stall in the dark, sold the most ever, and ended up with twenty-pound notes stuffed haphazardly in all our pockets, convinced we must have lost fortunes in the rush and panic. Afterwards we stood forlornly in the car-park in Digbeth, late at night with eight hundred pounds in cash, and waited for The Fat

Tulips to work their way round the one-way system and meet us so we could follow them fifty thick foggy miles to Nottingham to stay at Theo and Sheggi's; at the roundabout just up the road I let a double-decker bus pull out in front of me, and I half-thought we were going to lose them forever. Manchester Boardwalk packed with people, pressed up against the front of the stage, standing on chairs in corners trying to get a better view, the atmosphere electric, The Field Mice the best ever and good-humoured, even playing "Sensitive". Reading After Dark, Blueboy as support, their first gig, our first hearing of "Popkiss", demanding it as a single. And the last gig, Glasgow King Tut's, when we asked for a meeting with the band, knowing they weren't happy and we weren't happy - it was just a matter of whether they left the label or we kicked them off. We thought. They wanted to be famous and yet didn't seem to want to put in the time and trouble, we thought, and we seemed to be getting the blame for holding them back - meanwhile we were getting increasingly exasperated with having to ring five different people to get the answer to even the simplest of questions. But, before the meeting kicked off, and completely out of the blue, Bobby announced he was leaving the band. Mark went to the station to try and get a train home straight after the soundcheck, but couldn't afford it. Harvey kicked Mark mid-way through the set. And the party that The Orchids had thrown for us all fell a bit flat. The very last gig was in London at the Dome about ten days later, Thursday November 21st 1991; there's a video of it around somewhere that a friend of The Sugargliders' made and the boy it homes in on at the end who's in tears at the front is Tim who later

turned up singing in Shelley on SARAH 98. The last song they played was "The End Of The Affair", probably the only time they ever did it live. Michael said "the end," and I surprised myself by actually, when it came down to it, being quite sad.

Dear something, dear someone

We first met St. Christopher outside Le Cav in Bristol in October '88, which is odd because I'd known about them for years before that from when I used to write a fanzine called "Are You Scared To Get Happy" with a friend, Mark, who was from Sheffield and obsessed with everything about the city - all those obscure bands from the late '70s early '80s - ABC, Human League, Clock DVA, Pulp... and Vena Cava, who became St. Chris. We scratched "For Mark" in the run-off groove to their first SARAH single as a sort of thank you - I was going to send him a test-pressing, so he could see, but then I thought no, I'll wait till we've got finished copies, that'll be nicer. But a few days before the stock came in he died. He'd been diagnosed with cancer in his last year at university; radiotherapy, chemotherapy, each time they thought he was cured, it just came back.

I know all the things I should say, but it's so hard and I'm not sure I want to anyway

Heavenly tour July 1992. Sweltering close nights followed by thundery M5s to Birmingham and back. Before we left I was on the phone to The

Fleece getting told they could no longer promote the Bristol gig the following weekend and we'd have to take over, and suddenly there was the loudest crash and the whole sky lit up. The rain was monsoonal and I had to go to the post office and East Street was deserted, just a few clutches of people huddled in doorways, like you'd imagine Bedminster after an earthquake or chemical leak or nuclear explosion. Then a late night trek back from Southampton with the windows down rubbing spit in my eyes and digging my nails in the palms of my hands to try and keep awake at the wheel.

A few days later I unexpectedly bump into Eddie in the Rough Trade shop in that hideous hot crush of people for Heavenly that hideous hot afternoon and he's there again that same evening at the bar at last orders at the White Horse for Small Factory and The Harvest Ministers - and then he ends up coming on tour with us for the next fortnight.

Dull grey Richmond Park on a Sunday afternoon in a flowered dress I slept in the night before on a floor in Holloway and white shoes that were new and I remember clambering over logs and muddying them. And then Burger King in Richmond at tea-time and endless sodding trains to sodding Harlesden when we could have just got the North London line, and the beginnings of a cold that we swap back and forth for the rest of the tour, sharing Lockets behind merchandise stalls all over the country. Blueboy and The Harvest Ministers at The Mean Fiddler the night Richard Waaaaah taped "Cloud Babies" Sarah 70 version, and trying to ring Paul in Manchester at his mum's all soundcheck because it was his birthday. Derby next day I'm ill and exhausted and it has corner shops where you

have to ask for tampax and they come wrapped in brown paper bags, and I nearly smash the car up pulling out onto a surprise dual carriageway on the way back to Bristol after. Lime Street, The Planet X, and the second I breathe in I start to cough, it's so damp and dank and horrible. (We're next there fresh off a plane from Tokyo via the Jericho Tavern and a late night drive back to Bristol in a gale, and one minute it's sunshine on The Ginza and the next it's The Planet X ankle-deep in water with its roof burnt off and it's November and I've got holes in my shoes and Harvey plays the whole gig in his dufflecoat with the hood up.)

That Heavenly tour and the days and nights off in Bristol. Gaol Ferry Bridge back when it was still green, after pub closing, leaning on the railings and-gazing at the moon reflected on the water or the thick yellow-brown mud of The Avon. Eddie getting bowled over (his words) by Royal York Crescent, collapsed on that bench, drunk at midnight. Scrambling up Brandon Hill, Cabot Tower, the Hartcliffe Riots and we're in Leigh Woods emptying our pockets onto the bonnet of a patrol car, getting told "you're a bit far from home aren't you?" Twelve hours later three of us walk through Regent's Park on our way to do a Radio 1 Evening Session half hour Sarah feature and I'm hung over and bleary-eyed and hell, no, of course I never listened to it. Last Sunday, on the foreshore of a Humber littered with old squeezey bottles and platform shoes, I said my favourite tours were The Field Mice May 1990 and France last year and Eddie said that that Heavenly tour was his only ever one but that it was one of the best times he ever had and, yeah, me too.

*Stained-glass windows
Like my heart, wide-open*

Down below the pavement in Kemp Town with Cameroon one-up against Argentina out the corner of my eye... Brighton, June 1990... Meeting Keith Blueboy for the first time, us all drunk and silly, high on a buzz of recording, and him coming in on it cold. A day off and a night at the Pop Club, The Field Mice, The Wake and Brighter, and Paul Robinson, just back from sea, all cut-down jeans, tanned legs, smiles and possibilities. And then a late night drive back to Brighton for two days mixing, celebrating with chips on the beach when we finish. (Brighter: "Laurel". Later re-recorded in its entirety in Weston-Super-Mare.)

*20th century science is post-industrial
witchcraft. Einstein was wrong:
the toothless shall return*

"Here I am on a park bench in Highbury, feeling depressed, eating a Mars Bar and worrying about the ozone layer and the bulldozers in Antarctica. We'll be recording on the 15th and 16th, so look out for a tape thereabouts. There's so much space left I feel I ought to go on, but all my thoughts are so maudlin and self-pitying I won't bore you w/details. XXX Ulric." A postcard from The Golden Dawn. We'd sent the money for recording their second single up to Glasgow a couple of months before, and this was the first we'd heard

since. But they always were a strange band. When we first offered them a deal Ulric wrote back a long letter mostly about him not being able to see why everyone was making such a fuss about the Herald of Free Enterprise sinking when apparently it was just full of Sun readers on a special-offer cruise.

Call it a lost weekend if you want - alcohol says it all, I remember nothing at all

It's my fault. There we were, surveying our four free-drinks tokens each and the small size of the bottles of beer and I said to Mathew that it would be better to drink spirits if he wanted to get drunk, but neither of us knew then that in Spain they just fill your tumbler till you say stop. He said next day he had no memory at all of wrecking the hotel room - Dick just came in and found the standard lamp knocked over and smashed, pictures off the wall and a table broken. But when we showed the damage to the hotel staff, they didn't care, just wanted autographs. The second night Heavenly played Madrid I was so tired I collapsed backstage and slept through their entire set, sprawled uncomfortably amid the support band's equipment and everyone's bags.

Lean on a doorframe, make me shake

Grim night, 1993, last weekend in February or first in March. An M62 with snow settled on the

outside lane and hard-shoulder, severe weather warnings, a blizzard. Over the Pennines, pitch, lonely, terrifying. Leeds is the hugest relief. I overshoot The Fenton, wind up parking the other side of the university. Upstairs you wouldn't believe the cold. The Golden Spires are Stewart Boyracer and a friend doing an entire set of Golden Dawn songs, and a glimpse of what seeing The Golden Dawn live could have been - when the nearest we ever got was Ulric coming round for half an hour once in full cycling gear. Paul ends up playing stand-up drums on one track, I can't remember why, like I can't remember why he played tambourine for Bratmobile in Manchester that time when they were over touring with Heavenly, so drunk it wasn't until next day he realised his hand was swollen, bloody. We play snowballs with Boyracer through the university grounds, then drive them back to Harehills, that house so cold I can't stop shivering when we leave, trying to manoeuvre the car through little hilly snowy streets with legs that just won't stop shaking.

This is it, isn't it?

An early morning teary call from Harrogate: SARAH is over, she says, everything's finished, Bob Stanley's offered all our bands record-deals and... everything's over, everything. Last night in Stoke, everyone drunk on the way back from The Wheatsheaf and Julian babbling things he probably knows he shouldn't, and at first she doesn't really understand what it is he's telling her

but then she suddenly does... something about SARAH not being a proper record-label, about us holding everyone back. A night of no sleep and then an early morning drive across the Pennines, feeling sick and still not believing. This would be... end of '89 sometime, I guess.

I showed to you a copy-book with all my favourite drawings; you said you liked the one I called The Evening of the Fireworks

We pore over the home-made effects box and the engineer insists on getting a copy of "Take Me Down"'s guitar sound for his sample-library, because it's like nothing he's ever going to hear again this side of Armageddon, he reckons. Down in the kitchen Christian mentions this other band Slowdive he's helping out when they play live because they need an extra guitar, though it's nothing serious (or not until a few weeks later when they sign to Creation). Cellist Alan has to leave before we've finished mixing because he's at boarding school and only got permission to stay out till ten. This was also the weekend when we first got to hear "New Year's Honours", back at drummer Michael's house in Wokingham - I don't know why Harvey sent him a demo and not us. When we got home we wrote and told him we wanted this to be the new single, and he wrote back and said no, so we had to ask him again and again until he gave in. (Eternal: "Breathe")

Let Me Dream Of Paris

Paris 1994 and me and Harvey discover the Parc des Buttes Chaumont at dusk. Getting expensively drunk on the Place de la République because we just found out Hackett from The Orchids broke his leg badly playing football meaning they couldn't make the tour we were in Paris promoting so, having finished our respective interviews and radio sessions, what else could we do? Except drink wine and stagger back to our nearby hotel rooms and oh, fuckit, I don't know.

Can't you feel your life is burning underground?

Are you the girl that stands in the rain?

Standing in the cold and wet outside Revolver's old warehouse in Dove Lane after dialling 777477 for Ace Taxis about 30 fucking minutes ago, hundreds of pounds worth of unsleeved SARAHs 24 and 25 piled up in boxes in puddles beside us and Mike comes out, looks at us, looks at the sky, and then says helpfully "Do you think this is wise?"

Christ, all those bloody taxis - two, sometimes three in a row for big pressings, stuck in the road outside No. 46 blocking traffic while we unload. One time we come back and find two fire engines pulled up outside because we've left the oven on to warm the flat up and I think we must've

left the grill on too and set fire to toast-crumbs or something because now there's smoke pouring out the front door and our landlord rushing about tearing his hair and - well, we just stand as nonchalantly as we can under the circumstances in front of the 2000 copies of "You Should All Be Murdered" we've just unloaded and hope he doesn't spot them because, well, we're not supposed to run a business from the flat, you see...

All I feel as the rain comes down is down

... gazing winsomely up empty slip-roads... getting dumped on the M25 and having to scramble over the fence and make it cross-country to a bus-stop on the edge of Heathrow... watching the M5 shoot past through doors tied together with string on our way to remix SARAH 1... explaining that no, I'm not a penniless student, I'm a self-employed businessman and no it's *not* dirty washing bound for the family Hotpoint in those nice black sacks, it's T-shirts to flog at a gig in Brum... getting bought tea by strange men in lay-bys on the A38... getting touched up by strange men in Cavaliers on the M4... rolling down to Exeter with a lorryload of Frisps and a crisp connoisseur at the wheel to see The Orchids and Remember Fun at the Arts Centre... waiting on the edge of Portsmouth in the rain for two hours after recording Action Painting!'s first 7" and then giving up and catching a train... hi-jacking some poor guy who pulled up at Filton to ask for directions to Clifton and demanding he took us with him (I still can't believe I did that)... standing in the middle of Cheshire with armfuls of LPs after people suddenly decide they're not really going to Manchester after all... trudging

in from ring roads on link roads and spine roads and boy do you get to see the parts of Reading the tourists never see...

I love your car and the way you drive

A Fiesta, bright red with a black roof - just like cars should be. Mark St. Christopher used to try and convince people the number plate was POP 1. We see it one morning in the window of a showroom on Gloucester Road. Clare says we'll pay by business cheque and the man smiles and says "Good old dad, eh?" and we say "No." And if occasionally we find ourselves on the M6 on the frozen edge of the Lake District in November with no headlights, or unable to get into first without the engine stalling on the A68 south of Edinburgh, or hiccupping to a halt whenever it looks like rain, usually 2 seconds into the big roundabout at Bedminster Bridge, then at least we never have to mend an exhaust pipe with a coke can and a bit of wire like Rob Even As We Speak did with that awful old van they bought, lying on his back in the road after a night on the floor of Boyracer's old house in Harehills.

And I do seem to remember Amelia once driving back from Brussels to Oxford without any brakes.

If you need someone to tell you everything is going to be all right

Clambering out of a warm cosy bed in Headingley when it was still dark to drive to

London for The Orchids, Northern Picture Library and Blueboy at the Garage, the morning after the night before when Boyracer Mk. 1 split up in the studio mid-song. This is just after New Year, 1994. To Wetherby to borrow Stewart's bass-amp before nine o'clock, back to Leeds to pick up a friend, and then hitting the A1 and M11. Snow on the ground near Cambridge and, although no more actually falls, it's nasty. An hour or so later we reach Matt's parents' where there's a note by the phone that I catch out of the corner of my eye when I go in - "Orchids in hospital." I'm not supposed to have seen it, I'm supposed to have been sat down with tea and told in person. The van hit black ice near Dumfries, about two hours out of Glasgow, turned over and rolled down an embankment and two of them are in hospital. It's not until later that I can find out any details, and right now I have to sort out a headline band for tonight and some equipment other than the bass-amp that's in the boot of my car. I call Harvey, and he jokingly suggests The Field Mice reform for the evening, since Northern Picture Library and Blueboy are playing anyway, and when I call Bobby he doesn't really react and, who in hell knows why, but they end up doing it. A quick rehearsal in a backstage room with the door tight shut and there they are on stage, two Field Mice, even playing three songs that never got played live at the time - "Willow", "An Earlier Autumn" and "A Wrong Turn And Raindrops", with Harvey on harmonica, which he didn't even play on the record. Two months later The Orchids finally make it down to launch "Striving For The Lazy Perfection" two months late, with Harvey playing a few songs from his album and Blueboy and Secret Shine supporting. At the

bar Julian Henry asks Harvey if he's going to talk between songs and Harvey says he's going to say "this one's about Catherine... this one's about Clare" and we all smile, but I'm not at all surprised when he does. Each night in France, when he stepped in at the last minute to replace The Orchids after Hackett broke his leg, he halfway makes up by singing a refrain from Gilbert O'Sullivan's "Claire" - until the last night in Vannes when he just calls me a cow.

Unbelieving, unaccepting Un-everything with a positive ring

December 28th 1991. We're in Brussels, or what we were promised would be Brussels but is actually this nameless and drab little dormitory town a few miles outside the ring-road - and of course no-one's done any publicity. We're given meals in the pizza restaurant a few doors down the road, Heavenly at one table, the TVPs at the next... we eat, drink, play to an empty room and then spend the night on a cold hard floor fifteen miles south in Nivelles. Lying awake in the dark I can't help thinking back to that morning, of how the boat-train from Zeebrugge had dropped the two of us chilly and yawning into the mists of pre-dawn Bruges at 6am, and how we'd wandered for hours along ghostly canals and bridges, totally alone in a magical medieval kingdom, a spellbound town waiting for the first kiss of sun. And how today shouldn't really have ended like this, it should've ended with fireworks, rainbows, and dragons.

*Through the glass I see
The thing that always frightens me*

Secret Shine, St. Christopher and The Sweetest Ache at Pentre Legion Hall, high up in the Rhondda Valley. People sit on chairs round the edge of the big empty room and stare at them. This really isn't that much fun.

There's a fabulous electric storm as we drive home. All down that long dark A-road twisting back through Tonypandy and Pontypridd it's spitting rain and then, as we hit the M4, the whole sky just shakes and lights up like daytime - only the sky's more yellow than blue, bruise-yellow. No thunder, and no real rain, just this weird intense light that keeps filling the entire sky, and each time it does the whole world seems to tremble like somebody's shaking the camera. We drive onto the Severn Bridge feeling helpless, a small toy car.

Secret Shine went back to the Rhondda a few weeks later and got beaten up, or almost - they hid backstage. Just local lads having a bit of fun, the police said.

*Fell from a stool in a club where they
played punk rock*

Meeting Harvey and Mark Fieldmouse off Waaaaah's Cutie Coach for our first Bristol Christmas Party on board The Thekla, 1991, and driving up Park Street past people clutching the Sarah Guides to Bristol that came in their free jamboree bags. Tramway are on after Secret Shine,

Matthew prowling the stage with the microphone-stand in one hand and a wine-bottle in the other, growling "No-one likes us and we don't care." Drinking cider, forgetting I'd had lager at the soundcheck, and eating nothing all day except the free chocolates we handed out on the door, and the ever-so nice complete stranger who ended up looking after me, who had nothing whatsoever to do with me being that drunk, and whose foot I finally threw up on, is introduced to me eighteen months later as Derek, our new Label Manager at Revolver. That night our flat had an English room, a Welsh room and a Scottish room; next morning I drove The Orchids down to fetch their van, hung over and all over the place in the wrong lane, and then they had to try and follow me back. After our last party, we had thirty-two to stay - I remember that walk home over Redcliffe Bridge and through the park, Boyracer and Hood trailing after us crocodile-like, with a loud-hailer and an inflatable Santa.

That first party at The Powerhaus a friend of Mark's blew up all the balloons, and we never did find out who he was. The Orchids joined The Field Mice on stage for their encore and The Field Mice looked glum. We had a merchandise stall and we got Julian, who'd come down from Stoke, and my friend William to do the raffle, only they got stage fright and gave the prizes to people who yelled out numbers they liked; first prize was a t-shirt saying "I Won The Raffle At The Sarah Christmas Party", and next was some mince pies.

Happy is watching the world spin

The board in the hotel lobby reads: "Osaka Grand Welcomes Heavenly" - and then there's a little Stars and Stripes stuck on alongside. Seeing us laughing, they apologise profusely, and when we come back later it's been replaced by a Union Jack. In Japan, we are popstars. "Our Love Is Heavenly" sounds from speakers in the street outside the Parco department-store. People wait in hotel foyers to have records signed and chefs emerge from their kitchens to ask for autographs. At a record signing in Tower in Nagoya, someone produces a photocopy of a Sarah Guide to Bristol and I mark our house. Heavenly become fashion icons, modelling their own choice of daywear for "Cutie" magazine. Two nights in Tokyo, 600 people a night. Before the show the band are told they must stay backstage in case they get mobbed; afterwards, we're bundled on board mini-coaches in a dazzle of flash-guns. 6pm start and 30 quid a ticket, people rush the stage as the doors open and Dick murmurs that the sound-desk's the same as the one they have at the Reading Festival. And while Pete replaces a broken string, Amelia impersonates seafood and Cathy translates. Taco. Octopus.

And we've seen Mount Fuji from the Bullet Train, and walked to Osaka Castle before breakfast, and bought throwaway see-through umbrellas in the rain under Shinjuku's sleek glass towers, and been woken in the night by motorbike-gangs ripping up Nagoya's main drag; we've drunk sweet hot coffee out of cans from vending machines in the street and cold-tea that looks like apple-juice from plastic bottles in boardrooms while exchanging

business cards which we've had made specially for the trip and won't ever use again.

And when you smile you paint my whole world in

Toulouse Friday 20th May 1994. The sun is scorching and we're all gathered round the pool. It was a four hour drive from Bordeaux to this out-of-town venue, Le Bikini, with a crack inching down the minibus windscreen all the while. And we skirted the town for what seemed like an age, making anxious phonecalls from deserted car-parks on deserted trading estates, before finally arriving and finding ourselves with an afternoon to laze in the sun. There are blue metallic walkways and behind the stage there's a huge picture window looking out over trees and the river. Keith and Paul are sitting over by the shallow end with a guitar, playing and singing quietly, writing; the rest of us read, talk, whatever. Most of us swim and the water in the pool is freezing, this is May before it's had the summer sun to warm it up, and I graze my knee on the raw concrete bottom. That afternoon, by the door to the venue, Bobby played me "Emma's House" on his guitar. And that night Keith and Paul kicked off their set with two acoustic songs, one of them brand new and written that afternoon. It was called "Toulouse" and it was the last song ever to get released on Sarah Records.