

TREMBLING BLUE STARS

Brownie's, New York City, March 17th
Metro Café, Washington DC, March 18th
The Fez, New York City, March 20th

*Lilacs blossom just as sweet
Now my heart is shattered.
If I bowled it down the street,
Who's to say it mattered?
If there's one that rode away
What would I be missing?
Lips that taste of tears, they say,
Are the best for kissing.*

[Dorothy Parker, *Threnody*, New York City, 1927]



TREMBLING BLUE STARS – the name comes from Pauline Réage's infamous sado-masochistic novel *The Story of O* – are a 5-piece band from south-east England led by singer and songwriter Bob Wratten – but you probably knew that. You probably also knew that Bob's first band, The Field Mice, recorded a handful of singles and albums for the Bristol-based Sarah label, before splitting acrimoniously in Glasgow in 1991. You might even know that after The Field Mice fell apart Bob released four singles and an album under the name Northern Picture Library, with Field Mice vocalist Annemari Davies and drummer Mark Dobson. But what you almost certainly *don't* know is that while you've been

reading this paragraph and feeling pretty damn smug and pleased with yourself for being so clued-up on such utterly inconsequential UK indie-pop trivia, an astonishingly cute baby unicorn materialised just three feet behind you, glanced round rather self-consciously, then slipped out discreetly via the fire-exit, leaving nothing but a faint glittery trail where it had passed and the merest hint

of damp pineforests mingling with the cigarette smoke. I expect this sort of thing happens to you quite a lot – I've met your sort before. And I myself gave up going in record-shops after a similar missed epiphany, resolving to spend the time thus gained riding every Greater London bus-route in numerical order, from No.1 (Tottenham Court Road station to Canada Water) to 499 (Romford Circular), in the anxious hope of finding sudden spiritual redemption on some unsuspected rain-splashed high-street.

*Life shouldn't be about: "I'm happy, but..."
I just think you should chase specialness for love...
... some things are worth the chaos that they come along with.
Don't you want more?
Don't you want to burn, burn again?*

[Trembling Blue Stars, *Letter Never Sent*, London, 1997]

Trembling Blue Stars: to know them is to love them, and to love them is to run the risk of embarrassing yourself in front of potential employers. It's pop's greatest paradox.



Playing lead guitar and occasional keyboards for The Field Mice was Harvey Williams, and Harvey's now re-joined Bob in Trembling Blue Stars on guitar, keyboards and programming. Harvey also has his own solo-projects: he released half a dozen singles on Sarah Records as Another Sunny Day, and later a couple of albums under his own name.

Continuing the ex-Sarah theme, on bass we have Keris Howard, formerly of Brighton pop-trio Brighter (and now also recording his own songs under the name Harper Lee),



and on vocals and percussion Beth Arzy (of Los Angeles pop-tarts Aberdeen – yes, we've brought our own in-house interpreter). Finally, on drums, we have Jonathan Akerman. Jonathan has no guilty past, but hopes one day he'll be able to look back on his time in TBS with a truly profound sense of shame. Scattered around this

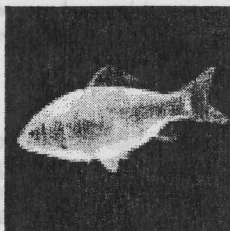
leaflet are some photos enabling you to recognise them – although one of them might be a red herring. Alternatively cut them out, mount them on cardboard, and amuse yourself by playing an extremely dull game of *Happy Families*. Or an immeasurably pointless one of *Snaps*. I should also point out to anyone picking this up at the Fez that Keris and Jonathan won't be appearing tonight, as they have jobs to go to.

Trembling Blue Stars' releases have all appeared on the Shinkansen label, but their most recent album – *Broken By Whispers* – was licensed in the USA to Sub Pop, a small Seattle-based indie. And, provided it's any good, they'll release the next one too – that's *Alive To Every Smile*, which the band has just begun recording. There should also be a new four song EP sometime in the summer. All right, all right, it's a goldfish, not a herring. I couldn't find any herrings.

For more information about Trembling Blue Stars, the "unofficial" Farewell To Forever website has news, interviews, lyrics, reviews, photos and a message-board featuring regular appeals for pen-pals, lost puppies, calm etc... while the "official" Shinkansen site has a comprehensive mail-order service and lots of incomprehensible nonsense. But at least it's official incomprehensible nonsense.

Which seems like a cue for me to break off, change typeface, and say that since I don't know who you are, there's a fair chance you don't know who I am either, so – maybe I should tell you a bit about Shinkansen, a silky-smooth, exquisitely-proportioned but sadly embittered young record-label often to be found crouched awkwardly a few streets south of Waterloo station in London, and inexplicably named after the Japanese inter-city high-speed rail-network. Maybe I should even tell you a little about some of our less blue, less tremblesome and less starlike bands? Or maybe I should just ply you with double vodkas and hope you'll eventually ask me if I'd like to see your tattoo of Bobby Gillespie on a donkey. Either way, this seems as good moment as any to ask if you'd mind turning over...

**FREE!!!
PLEASE
TAKE
ONE!!!**



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Shinkansen Recordings: helping to instigate worldwide socialist revolution since 1995

shinkansen

RECORDINGS

PACIFIC RADIO/MONOGRAPH

The guitar-spattered soundtrack to a remake of *Logan's Run* set in a post-nuclear North London where all popsongs over two minutes long are dumped on the dial-a-ride to Wood Green Shopping City* and left there to *ad lib* and fade forever. Recorded under the spirit-guidance of Guided By Voices and the roughly improvised shelter of a battered black umbrella found abandoned on the Piccadilly Line late one Tuesday, this is the sound of The Byrds playing CBGBs in a parallel 1976, of drunken lovelorn country duets sung at seedy pub lock-ins, of Teenage Fanclub being dragged kicking and screaming into... some sort of deep steep-sided pit, hopefully. Pacific Radio are just Monograph with a better name, and both are the work of the very tall Rob Crutchley, with various friends – notably Clive and Martine Broken Dog – helping out.

[*a North London shopping-mall dating from the days before shopping-malls had been invented – don't worry about it...]

TOMPOT BLENNY

Having spent the last five years moving round the East Midlands like hunted men – and occasionally like Genesis in the *I Can't Dance* video – Tompot Blenny are currently holed up in a suburb of Nottingham, from where they nervously watch the world go by through thick lace curtains under the mistaken impression that the world is staying still and the house itself is moving. They named themselves after a fish, put out two of the first five singles on Shinkansen – records which had people shaking their heads and muttering things like "Young Marble Giants", "early Microdisney", "Rough Trade era Go-Betweens" and "I paid good money for this, damn you" – and then went off to seek their fortunes in Leicester, since when they've rarely looked back, largely due to a morbid fear of tripping over things.

CODY

Imagine sparse, swooping electronic rhythms and guarded whispers building to a climactic, hypnotic, multi-layered swirl of overlapping voices. Now imagine all that taking place inside a melting cathedral of guitars. Now imagine a regular tetrahedron turned inside out and then folded along a line joining the top vertex to a point two-thirds of the way along the bottom edge. Hmm. You're good at this, aren't you? You've also just imagined Cody's second single, *Rounder*.

A slap of beauty across the face of the void, proving that Oxford isn't just the home of guitar-based prog and bouncing perpetual teenagers. Layering the lovely sounds of gently distressed guitars over gliding beats and euro-tinged synthtones, Cody reject pointless experimental widdling in favour of attention-grabbing, genre-trashing, silver-plated pulse-pop. Cody thumb their collective nose at the shuffling masses of the musically destitute and sneer at their citadels of tedium. Thoughtful, articulate and above all sensible, Cody's electronically-augmented post-pop pushes light into those shady corners dull bands avoid. They may not wish to rock your world, but they'd certainly love to wiggle it from side to side a bit.

[extract from Stillpoint Primer press-release, by Cody]

HARVEY WILLIAMS

Trembling Blue Stars are probably already on stage by this point, in which case you're almost certainly now gazing at their dapper young guitarist with that deeply disturbing cocktail of animal lust and scientific curiosity which normally has me reaching surreptitiously for my tranquilliser darts. You're probably also saying to yourself *what would this band be without him?* And what sort of music would a man like that make if left to his own devices? And what if his devices don't work in the USA due to the different voltage – is there some sort of adaptor plug available? Whatever answers you come up with, though, almost certainly won't countenance the exquisite keyboard-based meditations on life, love and the pursuit of record-shops that make up the bulk of Harvey's not especially bulky oeuvre. And that's all I'm going to say here, because he'll almost certainly pick one of these up and start reading it, and I'll get horribly embarrassed if he were to discover my true feelings.

BLUEBOY

More grist to the Sarah Records legend-mill. Blueboy have, over the years, been a strange and indeterminately-limbed beast; and yet, whoever might have lurked sugar-dusted on the crispy rim of their doughnut, ever constant at the core was the songwriting duo of Keith Girdler (vocals) and Paul Stewart (guitars) – and I'd better interrupt myself here to point out that this metaphor is based on a jam doughnut, not a ring – if it was a ring doughnut, you might think I was implying that Keith and Paul were basically just an empty space. When obviously I meant they were a large globule of jam. Maybe this wasn't such a good metaphor after all, and I should just tell you that these songs were all recorded in a barn in Warwickshire, and we shall never hear their like again. Ignore the doughnut stuff.

FOSCA

A London-based quartet led by Dickon Edwards, formerly of romo-soul pop-dandies Orlando. Imagine: the Pet Shop Boys busk Quentin Crisp outside Archway tube-station at 8pm on a smoky night in November; a West-End show with book by Evelyn Waugh and Baxendale doing the score; a glitterball lying silent on the floor of a Holloway Road attic under a broken skylight in a moonlit pool of rain. All human life is here, and more. I tried Americanising those reference points, but the whole conceit just fell apart like Morrissey's career after The Smiths folded, leaving nothing but a big ugly noise in an empty stadium somewhere in the suburbs of Detroit, metaphorically speaking. And I let that be a moral to me.

An eight-song long-player. Seven epics and one pop song. Two songs more than "Station To Station", and one more than "Don't Stand Me Down". Let's make this precious, so cellos AND sequencers to irk the purists. My lisping tongue, on my own words be it. Take that, Nature! We chatted about how much we hated everything and loved everyone. More work was done when I was out of the studio, pretending to smoke. It's okay, I used a little portable ashtray, given to me in Japan with a letter that quoted Rimbaud on "Hello Kitty" notepaper.

[extract from *The Story Of An Album*, by Fosca]

COMPILATIONS

If any of this sounds remotely plausible, we have a couple of low-price samplers available:

Lights On A Darkening Shore

And I'm trusting the off-guard glimpse of a distant, lit-up city from the top-deck of a 159 racing down Brixton Hill charges you with the same moment-melting urge to kiss strangers that hearing, say, "Smile Again" for the first time did – lights-out, tucked-up under the bedclothes, in the bed of someone stranger and more wonderful than you'd ever dared hope – because then you'll already know why I'm refusing to list here numbers, formats or pressing-quantities, just like you'll know whether to be scared, thrilled or bewildered when the conductor, handing you your change, bends low and whispers that talk at the depot these days is all of how we're each of us made from nothing but the dusty insides of long-dead stars.

[extract from sleeve notes]

19 songs for the price of a day-pass on the Croydon Tramlank, so an ideal way to sample a little bit of everyone before needing to grow up and settle down with just one band for the rest of your life. It comes in a full-colour digipak, with sleeve notes and photos of two local power-stations and two local geese.

Shinkansen Christmas EP

A re-packaged version of the 3" CD given away at the Shinkansen Christmas Party, featuring tracks from the recent albums by Cody, Tompot Blenny, Pacific Radio and Fosca, all of which post-date the above – plus *Christmas & Train-Trips & Things*, a previously unreleased Trembling Blue Stars song from 1997. I can't tell you any more about the packaging, because I haven't finished it yet. It could look like absolutely anything. I'm rather hoping it will look like the Seagram Building in a hailstorm, or perhaps some sort of flying horse, but it almost certainly won't.

MAIL ORDER

Below is a list of everything that's still on sale. All prices are in UK pounds. If you pay by credit or debit card, the conversion to dollars happens automatically. If you pay with dollars (cash or U.S. cheques), then you'll have to do the sums yourself: £1.00 = \$1.42 at present, and as long as it's roughly right, I won't quibble! You'll also need to add postage as follows: £1.35 for the first item; £0.85 for each subsequent album; £0.50 for each subsequent single or EP.

Payment Methods

Credit/Debit Cards: any VISA or MASTERCARD, but add 5% for cc's.
Cheques: U.S. cheques in dollars are fine, but add an extra \$6.
Cash: no extra charges, but seal the envelope well!
Sexual Favours: please don't ask, as refusal often offends.

TREMBLING BLUE STARS: *Her Handwriting* CD album - £9.50 *Dark Eyes* CDEP - £2.50
Lips That Taste Of Tears CD album - £9.50 *Broken By Whispers* CD album - £9.50
She Just Couldn't Stay CDEP - £2.50 *Doo-Wop Music 7"* - £1.00

THE FIELD MICE: *Where'd You Learn To Kiss That Way?* double-CD compilation/booklet - £11.00

PACIFIC RADIO: *Pacific Radio* CD mini-album - £7.00

MONOGRAPH: *Lorelei* CD album - £9.50 *Please Don't Be Afraid 7"EP* - £1.00 *Don't Gimme Shelter 7"EP* - £1.00

CODY: *Stillpoint Primer* CD album - £9.50 *Rounder* CDEP - £2.50 *Anticyclone 7"* - £1.00 CDEP - £2.50

FOSCA: *On Earth To Make The Numbers Up* CD album - £9.50 *The Agony Without The Ecstasy* CDEP - £2.50

TOMPOT BLENNY: *Found Under Blankets* CD mini-album - £7.00 *Green Is The Best Colour* CDEP - £2.50

BLUEBOY: *Love Yourself 7"* - £1.00 *Marco Polo 7"* - £1.00 CDEP - £2.50 *The Bank Of England* CD album - £9.50

HARVEY WILLIAMS: *California* CD mini-album - £9.50

VARIOUS: *Lights On A Darkening Shore* CD album - £3.50 *Christmas* CDEP/booklet - £2.00