

shinkansen RECORDINGS

newsletter no.3

april '99

Well, it gives me great pleasure... and the sooner I get this written, the sooner I can get back to doing it, so... let's get on. And, no, you've not missed anything... the last newsletter was No.2, back in December '97. And, as then, this is mostly a paper summary of stuff that's already been on the web-site, to satisfy all those still pining for The Good Old Days before computers, when telephones had dials, every office an abacus, and people would write on slates and goat-skins without ever a murmur of complaint being heard, except perhaps from the more ticklish of the goats.

The other man's grass is always further away

OK - when I left you, I think I was stranded on the edge of the known universe about to do battle with a gang of five-dimensional renegade gloop monsters from the planet Tzorg, yes? Well, I won't bore you now with details of my escape, or of my subsequent eye-opening but ultimately rather exhausting marriage to the many-legged Princess Tzorgassa, basically because I'm *already* so far behind with telling you what's been afoot in the world of pop that to delay any further would be madness, sheer madness... indeed, I'd been despairing of *ever* catching up but then, on glancing in my rear-view mirror a few seconds ago, I spotted Time's wing'd chariot being pulled over by the police after running the last set of lights, and thought to myself *well, maybe, if I put my foot down...*

So, I put down my foot, picked up my old diary, and cast my mind back to last Spring...

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings. Who the Hell are you?

... when the second TREMBLING BLUE STARS album, *Lips That Taste Of Tears*, was released, and promptly licked sore by a score of rapturous reviewers. Especially gratifying for me was the *What Hi-Fi?* review in which the virtues of good chunky bottom end were extolled, as for years I've been telling Bob he should face away from the camera in publicity shots. It was even a *Virgin Recommended Album* - you know, listening-posts, magazine ads, life-size cardboard cut-outs of Bobby and Annemari gazing meaninglessly into each other's eyes in every Megastore foyer, the whole caboodle. (Er - obviously we had to *pay* for this - in 1999, the only sure-fire way to get someone to tell you they love you is to give them money, and that's as true in the record industry as it is in life in general. Did you know, by the way, that the chain-stores get special discounts AND, unlike small indie shops, sale-or-return? Which is why staff at the latter always look so pallid and fretful, while at the former they all have snazzy matching jumpers and name-tags.)

Anyway, 14 songs - see box on right - no less than three featuring a revamped Annemari (ex Field Mice/NPL) on vocals (and, yes, it's her on the sleeve too). *The Rainbow* also came out as a single: the 7" had *Though I Still Want To Fall Into Your Arms* on the B-side, while the CD added *She's Always There*, originally the B-side of the *Abba On The Jukebox 7"*.

You say Tobago, and I say Tobago, let's call the whole thing Trinidad

More excitingly, Trembling Blue Stars begin recording again in May, once Ian Catt has finished producing the new Shampoo album (yay, Shampoo!). The plan is for a couple of singles at the end of the summer, an album in the autumn, and the introduction of a maximum as well as a minimum wage by Christmas, though TBS aren't really *too* involved in the last of those. We're especially taken with a gorgeous song called *Doo-Wop Music* which, yes, is a doo-wop number. But Bob's at pains to point out that it's very much *cutting-edge* doo-wop, and not at all cheesy. In my wilder moments - of which I try to have at least four a day - I like to think that there might be gigs to promote all this... and, tentatively, Bob has agreed that there might be. What do *you* think, readers?

Lips That Taste Of Tears (SHINKANSEN 10CD)

All I Never Said • Headlights
Never Loved You More • The Rainbow
Made For Each Other • Letter Never Sent
I'm Tired, I've Tried
You've Done Nothing Wrong Really
Old Photographs
Never Loved You More 2 • Deserve
Cecilia In Black & White • Tailspin
Farewell To Forever

**I may have the body of a
weak and feeble woman...
if you just hold on a mo,
I'll go and look in
the freezer...**

I've bored you before with reasons for NOT re-pressing the Sarah back-catalogue - the aesthetics, the finances, the fact the bands don't want us to, the fact that pop-music is supposed to be about THE PRESENT FLEETING MOMENT, not The Past... the fact I've got other things I want to do with your life... but still people badger us, corner us, push us into hedges and shout at us... and yet others, knowing nothing about Art, Style or Morality, auction off old 7"s that we lost money on, or sell CD-Rs they've made at home...

So - last autumn, we made two decisions: (1) all the above people would be dead before 1999 was out and (2) we'd celebrate 10 years since the first FIELD MICE single by releasing *Where'd You Learn To Kiss That Way?*, a 36 song compilation of their greatest moments, consisting of two CDs in a cardboard wallet with a spine too narrow or too wide depending on which particular mis-pressing you have (on the initial batch, it was 3mm - presumably the printers thought it was just a very small LP - making the whole package

**It's an ill wind that
blows its nose and
goes to bed early with
a hot-water bottle**

***Where'd You Learn To Kiss That Way?*
(SHINKANSEN 14CD)**

*Five Moments • If You Need Someone • Sensitive
Couldn't Feel Safer • Below The Stars
Coach Station Reunion • Everything About You
It Isn't Forever • Between Hello And Goodbye
And Before The First Kiss • Tilting At Windmills
Missing The Moon • Let's Kiss And Make Up
Triangle • Canada • Anyone Else Isn't You
September's Not So Far Away*

*Emma's House • Landmark • Willow
Holland Street • Clearer • Quicksilver
Star Of David • When Morning Comes To Town
The Last Letter • Indian Ocean
This Love Is Not Wrong • Fabulous Friend • White
When You Sleep • An Earlier Autumn
End Of The Affair • This Is Not Here
A Wrong Turn And Raindrops • So Said Kay*

an *incredibly* snug fit. Quite sexy, but impractical. Rather like the band.), together with a 20 page booklet containing a no-holds-barred all-holes-unplugged history of The Field Mice by Clare (my other half in Sarah), plus photos and colour shots of the original sleeves which, as those familiar with Field Mice artwork will know, makes for a centre-spread of quite breathtaking, coruscating, polychromatic beauty, rather reminiscent, to my mind, of the languid play of sunlight across rolling hills at eventide. And, just in case you disagree and feel moved to complain, the outer wallet features a picture of some rolling hills at eventide, with sunlight playing languidly across them. Which you should feel free to put in your pipe and smoke.

No demos or alternate versions, because if a track wasn't good enough in the first place, it won't magically have become good enough 10 years later... and if anyone who's just paid \$90 for a copy of *Coastal* feels cheated, well, tough, you're as bad as the person selling it: Supply and Demand - see any economics textbook (look under *Capitalism, Causes of...* or *Decent Society*,

Breakdown of...). And while people are still sleeping rough on The Strand and starving in the Third World (and the First... there ain't no indie-pop in the ghetto...), no piece of plastic with grooves in it is worth \$90.

**Yes Sir,
I can boogie.
I just don't
want to, OK?**

What else? Well, if you're Canadian, and thinking of going to the Toronto Film Festival, you might like watch out for *So Beautiful*, a 10 minute short that uses The Field Mice's *Willow* on the soundtrack. Small beans right now, maybe, but - hey, from great oaks little acorns fall. Also, while I remember: ice-hockey - what's all that about, then?

Finally, people keep asking us about the band Picture Center, because they've heard they feature ex-members of The Field Mice and Northern Picture Library. Sadly, the truth is a tad tangential to this. Basically, Picture Center originally featured Mark, who drummed for the Field Mice and NPL, and they once asked Annemari to sing, but she refused. Mark is no longer in the band. Annemari has never been. It seems the confusion arose because no-one read beyond the opening line of the press-release, and the band say they're as fed up as us. Then again, they wrote the press-release, so... well, let's just say, in the words of the rueful Eskimo on finding the electric de-mister he'd just installed in his canoe had burned through the sealskin, you can't have your kayak and heat it.

**A rose by any
other name
would be called
something else**

No wickedness for the sleepy

Continuing to work my way through ex-members of The Field Mice, though not in that sense, guitarist HARVEY WILLIAMS has recorded us eight short, sad and embittered new songs about lots of people he doesn't like, plus a few that he does, to be released on May 10th as the mini-album *California*. It's more in the vein of *Rebellion* than the old Another Sunny Day stuff - though not quite so much as *Rebellion* itself was - while the songs themselves continue to explore the vicississi... vicissississi... damn, I never could say that... ups-and-downs of Harvey's love-life, showcasing perhaps better than ever before his now familiar great ear for a tune and vast capacity for resentment. And, yes, that is a real flugelhorn - we wouldn't dare try to fob you off with samples, or garishly synthesised imitations. Except of Harvey himself, of course, who's been a cheap animatronic model for the past three years now. We just found it so much easier to work with.

Her Boychart - the one in which the fickleness of female desire is compared to the fickleness of the popcharts - is the one we would've released as a single, if we'd thought there was any chance of anyone playing it on the radio or buying it in a shop. And *Eurostar*, whilst

* Note for American readers: "train" - form of long-distance public transport still popular in European countries providing decent State subsidies; a sort of cross between a truck and a plane, hence the name.

obviously being inspired by the same train* that inspired the Boo Radleys, is much better than their similarly titled ditty, as it rhymes *record-shopping* with *Channel-hopping*. I can see the Eurostar from this window, you know, snaking out of Waterloo before heading off through Vauxhall, Wandsworth Common and Brixton High-Level, slowly gathering speed on its way to - well, I don't know where it ends up, actually. France, reputedly, but that all sounds a bit far-fetched. My money's on Tonbridge, or maybe somewhere over towards Hastings.

The sleeve depicts Harvey at sunset on Venice Beach, California, caressing the Pacific with his moody gaze. When this photo was first described to me, I was told he was sitting on "one of those life-saver things", and in my mind's eye I saw the great Hasselhoff himself, hot rivulets of salt water trickling from his muscled frame as he scooped Harvey from the waves, perched him upon his knee, and lectured him on the dangers of running barefoot on Californian beaches. Now I've seen the finished sleeve... well, it's a bit dark and shadowy, but I suspect it's just one of those inflatable rubber things. Shame.

Harvey's also starting playing around. Last October, he did a short set in the Poetry Cafe, Covent Garden, and this February a "show" in New York saw him become the toast of Manhattan - which makes a change from being the crumpet of Shepherd's Bush - though it was a bit unpublishised, I think, so if you live in NYC and are now feeling miffed at having missed it, just console yourself with the thought that, albeit briefly, he passed amongst you, and maybe you even unwittingly touched the hem of his garment as he did so. Although in that case you should count yourself lucky he didn't notice, as those ankle-length lamé gowns cost a fortune, and he has a tendency to sue.

There's also a "proper" British date coming up at the 12 Bar Club which, as those of you who've followed him thus far will know, isn't something to be scoffed at. So please leave all food and drink at the door. That's Thursday, May 6th, and he's on at 9pm. Also, he's asked me to say could those of you who've followed him thus far please stop, because it's getting really creepy and he keeps having to buy new locks.

Oh - and he's also playing at the Betsy Trotwood next Thursday, to entertain a bus-load of Belle and Sebastian fans off to the Bowlie at Camber Sands - but don't worry about that, because I don't intend posting this till the price of stamps goes down on Monday week, and anyway it's really just in the nature of a final cigarette or hearty meal for them before they set off. Oh, stop your bloody scowling - I like Belle & Sebastian, I'm just a bit bewildered by the cheery masochism of their fans, that's all... I mean, obviously Sarah Records' success was achieved almost entirely by us targeting the weird and inadequate - no offence - and making them believe they had something to live for, even if it was only a new Boyracer hat or Heavenly desk-tidy, so I should be used to it, but... they just seem to take it all to scary new levels... and, well, I was musing on this the other day when it suddenly dawned on me that B&S aren't a pop-group at all, but a vast anthropological experiment, an investigation into human suffering. It goes something like this:

California (SHINKANSEN 16CD)

Cindy's Been and Gone
The Ballad of Katie and Amanda
Her Boychart • *Lost California Love*
On Holiday • *Everything's Alright*
Introducing... • Eurostar

Note for German readers: I know he's a bit of a star over there, so apologies if you are at all offended, or were briefly excited, by my comparing David Hasselhoff to an inflatable rubber thing.

Level 1: do a gig at the Union Chapel, making your fans sit on hard wooden pews for 20 minutes between songs while you to decide what to play next. Rather than send you hate-mail explaining the concept of a set-list, however, they simply demand an encore, and more pain. Therefore, increase the suffering to Level 2...

Level 2: come on an hour late at the Shepherd's Bush Empire, then play so incredibly quietly that no-one can hear you. Rather than demanding their money back, however, your fans merely tell the few brave hecklers to shush, so they can work out if it's Stuart or Isobel singing. So, ratch up the suffering another notch, to Level 3...

Level 3: cancel your Philadelphia gig at the last minute due to one band member (out of, um, 37) being poorly. Rather than being confronted by irate fans screaming *But I've driven here all the way from Minneapolis!!!*, however, you just get sent cakes with *Get well soon Isobel* written in pink icing, and letters telling you how brave your decision was. So, in desperation, you push the suffering up into almost unbearable realms... Level 4... surely they have to break soon, even the game-show hardened Japanese contingent???

Level 4: tell your fans to assemble on the dulllest, most desolate stretch of beach Britain has to offer on a cold, wet weekend in April, with only the distant glow of Dungeness nuclear power-station to warm them...

Even now, Stuart Murdoch is dusting off his clipboard and preparing to take up position behind a tree - sorry, *the* tree - to note down how many will comply, before reporting back to the Jeepster labs...

Camber's a weird, scary place, you know, even without Sleater-Kinney wailing at you and Mercury Rev doing their 20 minute prog version of the theme to *Hi-de-hi*.

Ho-de-ho!!! (Sorry, it's a reflex thing...)

Crackerjack.

**He who pays
the piper
should always
get a receipt**

**A nod's as good as
a wink if it's on a
Triple Word score**

Well, I hinted last time - in that coy, fluttery, Diana-esque way you all find so appealing - that new **BLUEBOY** releases were imminent... and now, having teased you long enough, I shall give you the full works - though this time not in a *remotely* Diana-esque way, you'll be glad to hear, if we assume all the rumours are true.

OK, this is what happened. One Friday afternoon last Spring, I met singer Keith in the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall, and discreetly-wrapped packages were surreptitiously exchanged. When I got home, I discovered mine was the master-tape for eleven new Blueboy songs. Which made the set of five Field Mice finger-puppets I'd given him in return seem not just rather dull, but wildly inappropriate.

Riven by puppet-related guilt, we swung into action, and kept on swinging until *The Bank Of England* - a *Mojo* Album Of The Month, no less (still not sure if that's something to show off or keep quiet about...) - was leaping from CD display racks up and down the land. There was also a single: the 7" featured *Marco Polo* b/w *What Do People Do All Day?* - the former all bouncy, sparkly and guitarry, and thus undoubtedly a perfect pop single, and the latter all weird and backwards, and thus undoubtedly not - while the CD added *Love Yourself* and *Melancholia*. The album version of *Marco Polo* is longer than the single, by the way... this isn't especially interesting, but I thought I'd point it out, in case you thought you were going mad. You still *might* be, of course - I'm no psychiatrist - I'm just saying you shouldn't use this CD as a yardstick. It's far too small. As previously, everything was recorded by Richard Haines at The Dungeon, a wonderful studio in a converted barn in Warwickshire that's usually overlooked by sheep. Um, by which I mean there are usually sheep on the hill above the barn, looking over it, rather than that in the ovine edition of *The Good Farm Guide* it rarely gets a mention. That'd be silly.

**The Bank Of England
(SHINKANSEN 12CD)**

Joined-Up Writing • Miss UK
By Appointment • Love Yourself
Marco Polo • Jennifer Yeah!
Disco Bunny • Chadwick
Ask The Family • Bradford Texas
Angel At My Table

**I say Delgados,
and you say
Delgados, let's
call the whole
thing Arab Strap**

That's the end of the good news. The *bad* news is that, when he got back to Brighton, Keith was so excited by the finger-puppets he decided to disband Blueboy forthwith and go into the entertainment business instead. Which is why these days you'll mostly find him down on the sea-front, waggling away at people from inside a little canvas booth or, when one isn't available, from behind the neighbouring bushes.

In short, I think that new Blueboy recordings are unlikely.

**You can't teach
an old dog
quantum physics**

Leicester Square station, midnight: you're waiting for a northbound Piccadilly Line train that's not even up on the indicator board yet, and suddenly the same old questions people have been asking themselves late at night on lonely Underground platforms since time immemorial begin buzzing around inside your head, questions like: *What am I doing on the Piccadilly Line if I live in Kennington? Where exactly is Cockfosters, anyway? and What would happen to me if I accidentally went there?*

Well, I can't shed much light on the first of those, I'm afraid - other than to blame that weird man who kept buying you drinks all evening and who is, more to the point, now standing beside you asking if you'd mind seeing which pocket he's put his All-Zones Travelcard in, as he seems to have suddenly and inexplicably lost the use of both his hands - but I think I might now be able to raise the veil a little on what goes on in Cockfosters¹ when lights are low, curtains drawn, and the animals well strapped-in... namely, people make records like *Paper Museum*: 4 songs, all under 2 minutes long, full of guitars, and drums, and more guitars.

4 track 7"EPs? Playing at 45rpm? My God. What is the world coming to????

Here's a true story. The night before *Paper Museum* was released, I had a dream in which computer failure at IPC, triggered by the Millennium Bug's little-discussed "hippy default protocol", led both *NME* and *Melody Maker* to start the new century by accidentally reprinting issues from January 1973. And absolutely no-one noticed.

² I can tell you if you really want to know. But, be warned, you'll need a basic grasp of astrophysics, a solid understanding of entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and an extraordinarily trusting nature when I come to the bit about the giant Tzorgian toothbrush-monkeys with their flexible angled necks and compact, multi-tufted heads. Which I actually first warned you about YEARS ago in one of the Sarah 7" inserts... can't remember which one, offhand... presumably one of Tramway ones, given the distinct lack of panic and hoarding of corned-beef occurring. I always said a 30 second TV slot made more sense, but would they listen to me, oh no, not them... they never do...

OK, that's it, then, I sighed, *there's no point fighting; if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.* That evening, ITV broadcast a South Bank Show Special, *Mogwai live at Hampden Park*; with heavy heart, I sat down to watch, determined to educate myself. And it was then that it happened. As the boys nodded and noodled away in their sadly all-too-imitable style, I suddenly heard a lone voice rise up from the crowd: *oh my God*, it cried, *it's all gone horribly, horribly wrong!!!* Thrown, the band stopped, panic etched on their faces; next moment, from all around the terraces, came a noise like a hippo running amok in a bubblewrap factory: the sound of 50,000 people coming to their senses. And then the chanting began: *you're going home in a post-rock ambience... I wasn't alone after all...*

What we're discussing here - well, what I'm discussing, you've probably gone in the other room to listen to somebody from Birmingham constructing sonic Methodist chapels out of bass guitars and toy xylophones - is the debut 7" from **MONOGRAPH**, finally released last June (after the traditional re-cut, re-centre, two re-pressings and 48 hour community-service order for setting fire to the manager of the pressing-plant's Daimler)... and sold out almost at once, but don't worry, because the CD version of their *new* EP includes all 4 songs (*International Klein Blue; Cheering, Applause; Brevity Thing; Paper Museum*) from that debut - which, given the 7" itself has 3 songs - *Please Don't Be Afraid Of Anything, Strange Disease and A Story Time Has Told Us* - makes the CD a 7 track EP. And if *that's* not value for money, I'm a Dutchman. It also has guest handclaps by Clive and Martine from Broken Dog, and if *that's* not a selling-point then... er... anyone wanna buy a tulip? Windmill? Little mouse with clogs on???

Where, there on the stair, right... there... oh, and it comes in a really nice orange and black sleeve that looks like a tiger running round in circles viewed through the side of a milk bottle. You can't miss it.

And they play gigs!!! Only two so far, but The Dublin Castle on May 21st (supporting Stadia - ex Flowered Up), and June 14th at The Monarch should double that tally. They've also done a Peel Session, to be broadcast on May 5th, featuring *Don't Gimme Shelter, You've Got A Name, The River, Holding On In Colour and Finding New Rest For The Ghost*. First and last are the pick, in my book. And some of those, plus others, should turn up on a single and album pencilled in for late summer/autumn.

**Help! help!!!
- the Barbarians are
at the gate!!!
Oh, sorry, false alarm
- it's the Bavarians.
Wilkommen. Wir lieben
Seine Lederhosen und
Hatten mit feathers.**

¹ Actually, it's more New Barnet than Cockfosters, if we're going to be strictly geographical, rather than just emotional... but it's difficult to work up any aura of mystery about New Barnet.

**Me? No, I was
born to be wild.
What about you?**

CODY first caught our attention with *Simple*, a single on Shifty Disco, which was a bit like Stereolab, only without the gnawing-your-own-leg-off aspects - a bittersweet bubblegum epic of pop hypnosis in hyperdrone overdrive some said, before being told to shut up and get back behind their synthesiser. *Simple* got *Evening Session* airplay, was an XFM *Single of the Week*, and was followed by a 7" on Kooky, *Dark Blue* c/w *Wrongfooted*, this time sounding less like Stereolab and more like - again, I quote the band's own press-release - *drum and bass rhythms clattering like swooping pterodactyls while vintage synths hum like space-suited insects buzzing round sheet metal blossoms...*

Guitarist Steve actually used to be in the pre-Romo version of Orlando, and played on the Shelley single on Sarah... but now I'm coming on all parochial, so here's the full line-up, from which you'll see that Steve's but one of four well-oiled cogs (no offence) in a finely-tuned, swooping, clattering, buzzing, humming machine: Joe Boulter - vocals, sequencer, tone generator; Steve Jefferis - guitars, vocals, visuals; Chris Fish - synthesisers, press-releases; John Johnson - guitars, vocals.

Cody's first Shinkansen release, *Anticyclone*, came out last October, with *Anticyclone* and *Photogenic* on the 7", and those plus *Dovetails* and *Holding Pattern* on the CD. Do you want to know what it sounds like? Louder, I can't hear you! Louder!!! OK: [cough]... *Anticyclone, bouncing and fluttering in a windswept aircraft hangar packed with nervous guitars and white noise, buffeted like a trampoline in a gale... Photogenic, mixing rattling guitar screeches with pot-holing android euphonium noises and - hang on, I'm just going to type that bit again - pot-holing android euphonium noises - yup, I was right the first time - ...Dovetails, an unexpected splash of dayglo pop purity, limpid like light-dappled leaves, gently ushering in Holding Pattern, with its deceptively mellow opening and the sound of Gallic techno being harassed by a big scary noise monster with fangs and - actually, at this point, I'll stop, because it's got silly. If you want to find out what happened to the big scary noise monster, and discover whether or not the Gallic techno pressed charges on the harassment issue, try the Cody Website at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~boulter/cody.htm>. Incidentally, Chris, I'm not sure leaves *can* be limpid... unless they're transparent, which they're not, usually. Otherwise trees would be see-through, and squirrels paranoid to the point of extinction.*

**It's a long way to
Tipperary.
And, quite frankly,
I can't be bothered**

Finally... look out for another four track CD sometime late summer, featuring the utterly wonderful nine minute 3-part epic *Rounder*... it's just like *Monograph* never happened...

**An octopus in time
saves lots of panicky
ringing around at
the last moment**

The older we get, the more most of us worry about losing touch, getting things wrong and appearing foolish in front of The Kids; it's many years now since I attempted to hang in a buffalo stance, for instance - indeed, even at the time I was never quite sure I was doing it right. Others, though, clearly have fewer qualms: although by day they might be power-suited economic advisers or work for the BBC, come nightfall - or bank holidays - they're still able to let their inner-child run free. Sadly, my own inner-child is too busy hanging round the Pick'n'Mix counter of my inner-Woolworths to be of any use, but here's a quick round-up of what the less dysfunctional members of the Sarah family are currently making of their lives after having been taken into care and allocated new homes in a different part of the borough.

Ironically, most letters we get these days are from people wanting to know what THE ORCHIDS are up to... and I generally snort and reply, in the words of Joni Mitchell, *don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone... they paved paradise and put up a parking-lot.* i.e. "not much". Two of them got married... not to each other... and the rest... don't know. I heard a rumour Chris and James had concreted over a small area just off Sauchiehall Street and were now running it as an NCP franchise, but that could just be the bear talking.

I mean beer. There is no bear. [Grrrroowwlll.] Shhhhhhhh. No bear.

But rather than buy *Tiger Milk*, why not hunt down *Lyceum* and *Unholy Soul* (first two Orchids LPs) instead? And go and see Baxendale and Spearmint while you have the chance, just in case they give up too. Or buy *Music For Girls* (Baxendale) and *Sweeping The Nation* (Spearmint) if you don't live in London. (N.B. All gigs/venues mentioned in this newsletter are in London... because that's the way the world is...)

**It is a far, far
better thing I
do now than I
have ever done.
But that's
practice for you**

**Ring-a-ring-a-roses,
a pocket full of...
urrghhhhh...**

Similarly, people are belatedly discovering the limpid, leaf-like beauty that was EAST RIVER PIPE, and then becoming annoyed when told that Mel (SHINKANSEN 7CD) had to be withdrawn from sale when the band signed to EMI, before EMI-America closed down. Though possibly not as annoyed as the band were when EMI-America closed down. Anyway, E.R.P.

have a new album, *The Gasoline Age*, out on Merge/Touch & Go on August 10th, and a split 7" with Baby Bird is also planned. If you want to know more, write to: East River Pipe, c/o Big Ed's Moon Ride, PO Box 701, Summit, NJ 07902, USA. And, no, I don't know what "Big Ed's Moon Ride" is either, though I'd like to go on it, if it wasn't too expensive, and didn't involve being strapped into some sort of pod with strangers.

Fosca is the latest project of Dickon (ex-SHELLEY/ORLANDO): *slow, quiet, weepy, sad songs... eyes closed... Galaxie 500 covering Barbra Streisand... (his own words). I've just been listening to demos for a prospective album, On Earth To Make The Numbers Up... but I'm not going to describe the songs, just quote from the accompanying note:*

... so here's four songs for anyone who's ever felt like a child actor without the former fame... for anyone who hates England yet is innately, hopelessly English... for anyone who's read far too much significance into the cold, dead, half-eaten takeaway they slipped on on the way home the other night, for a moment frozen in horror that, like the takeaway, their epitaph is likely to read: "He/She/It seemed like a good idea at the time". (Read more at the Fosca website, <http://vzone.virgin.net/dickon.edwards>)

**Many hands make
Jack a weird,
scary boy**

The various bits of HEAVENLY - plus John ex-Dweeb (aka DJ Downfall) on drums - are now MARINE RESEARCH, and probably better than Heavenly, in the same way that Trembling Blue Stars are better than The Field Mice. There was a 7", *Queen B*, on Where You Are Is Where It's At, and now there's a split single (with Built To Spill) out on K, who'll also release their debut album this autumn. Oh, and they play The Monarch on May 7th. This is also probably a good place to mention that Amelia sings on one of the songs on Harvey's album, just in case you wouldn't buy it otherwise. I mean *this paragraph* is a good place to, not The Monarch. The Monarch's usually *far* too noisy.

Er... she was *supposed* to, don't worry...

Stewart and Nicola from BOYRACER are busy doing things mostly under the Empress and Stewart names, and releasing them on their 555 Recordings label (PO Box HP41, Leeds, LS6 4XN). Josh and Joel from THE SUGARGLIDERS still record as The Steinbecks. Everybody else has changed their names and got proper jobs, except Scott from SECRET SHINE, who's now on the staff at *Guitarist* magazine.

**I'm going outside and
I may be some my God,
have you seen the
weather out there???**

The three questions we get asked more than any other when people write to order stuff are (1) *Do you take dollars?* (2) *How much does it cost to send to the USA?* and (3) *Just how big exactly are these giant toothbrush-monkeys?* So, maybe I should just clarify:

(1) All foreign CASH (not cheques!) is welcome but, because I then have to change it back into pounds in order to buy flour and potatoes at the local market, you need to add approximately £2.50, because that's the minimum commission charged by banks and bureaux de change.

(2) For the purposes of indie-pop mail-order, the USA *does* actually constitute part of "The World" - you are *not* free-floating in space, crossing the Canadian and Mexican borders does *not* involve any sort of air-lock, and you will *not* "fall off the edge" if you sail due east from Cape Cod. Remember all those Apollo photos, of the world looking like a big blue and green ball? Well, it really is like that, despite what people in Montana or Idaho might occasionally tell you.

(3) For the purposes of armed conflict, the USA *does* actually constitute part of NATO. The key word here is "part". You might also like to know that a special U.S. edition of this newsletter is available with all the lead characters replaced by Americans in order to help you empathise. The part of Bob Wratten is played by Elliott Smith, Amelia Fletcher by Gwyneth Paltrow, myself by Lisa Simpson and Harvey Williams by... oh, who's that really annoying guy who pops up in everything?...

Absolutely huge.

And now, over to Suzanne Charlton at the London Weather Centre.