

Easter and the Totem. Sharpen that axe and grind it well !

In the beginning (or my Long Coat's Longer than yours!)

There was Mike Barry (aged 18), Ian Self (aged 18) and a Drum Machine. In those days all you needed was a couple of long coats, a mutual love of the Fall and Joy Division, a pile of existential books Kafka, Camus, Dostoyevsky etc and some lager. They took their name from a Jackson Pollock painting. It was the Summer of 1981 and the band were rough as a bear's arse.

A series of very primitive demos entitled "Queen Menace shock six" were produced (named after the guy who had shot blanks at the Queen during the Trooping of the Colour). This was followed by a recording session on 26th August 1981 at studio called Squirrel (How Rock and Roll!) somewhere down in Kent.

The demos were Produced by Tim Mattision, engineered by the studio owner Mike CW (The band insisting it stood for crusty wanker). They were assisted by John Diver who I think operated the Drum machine and played a Casio keyboard. The demos were just as rough as the earlier recording, due to the band's insistence on putting ten tracks down in one day. Somewhat ambitiously the band put out two tracks from this session "Nothing there" and "One" on a local compilation entitled "From Bromley with Love". It's by far the roughest thing on the Album but what the band lacked in technical ability they made up for in ideas. This was to be a trademark of the early years.

Following the release of the compilation Album the band were invited to play a series of gigs. The first was at the Ship in Plumstead on the 3rd October 1981. The band had extended the line up to John Diver, Guitar, Mike, Guitar Vocals, Ian, Bass and Steve Mountain, Drums. To say the gig was rough would be the understatement of the year. Under rehearsed, primitive playing, a lack of lighting plus copious amounts of alcohol meant that it was a shambles. But as the saying goes you've got to start somewhere. John Diver surrendered after this gig but was later to join the band twice more over the years. The band played as a three piece twice more after this with a gig at the 101 Club Clapham and Eltham Youth Centre. Both performances were better rehearsed and structured. The Totes were beginning to learn their trade.

By this time they had heard some demos by local band Foit including two future Totem Members Jocky Mundie and Neil Braddock. They were recorded at Ark Studios in Kingston (upon Thames unfortunately not Jamaica!) and the Totes also decided to record there, initially to make a single and then following encouragement from John Peel the sessions turned into an 8 track, 45 Rpm, 12 inch mini Album. These sessions went from November 1981 to April 1982.

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The sessions were difficult in that the engineers had different ideas about recording drums i.e. separate recordings with overdubs or all live, plus one particular strop by Mike over a an overdose of percussion. In addition money was short and time limited. The band was also going beyond it's original punk thrash to a more melodic structures and use of tapes and effects. The whole thing was probably made in less than 7 days recording over a period of months. Considering that the band were still in their teens ,could barely play and knew nothing about recording techniques it is by no means a bad effort.

One fanzine reviewer said that although it wasn't the most polished debut it had the potential to achieve much more in the future. There was also a decent sleeve designed by schoolmate Bill Webb. The back consisted of a collage by Mike including industrial sites at Elmers End (believe me there aren't many Industrial sites in Beckenham!).

Hip Replacement was pressed at Lyntone (Catalogue 11874) with a limited run of 500 copies. If you own one Record Collector magazine says it's worth £10. I've no idea who has copy number one, certainly Mike only has number 216. If you've got loads don't flood the market! Alternatively you can hear also hear the remastered CD on West Nile Records (Cat 0008).

Following the release of the album Ian Self bowed out from performing with the Totes save for turning up at just about every gig since and providing liquid refreshment for thirsty band members. He has one of the biggest Joy Division Bootleg collections of anyone I know and has every Fall Lp ever made. Like Mike he is loyal to his obsessions.

In the Autumn of 1982 the band became John Diver Guitar Keyboard/Vocals ,Tim Stocker Bass, Mike Barry Guitar, Vocals and, Steve Mountain Drums B Vocals. This line up played gigs at the Tunnel Greenwich and the Rock Garden in January 1983. They also recorded three tracks at Elephant Studios in Wapping, Dreams in Isolation, Irritant Urge, and We Fade which appeared on "The Sum is Greater than it's Parts". There are a number of other songs from this period that were never recorded that perhaps should have been. From memory it was a pretty good line up with contributions from Tim and John and backing vocals from Steve and John,

However by April 1983 Mike was off to work on a Kibbutz and then spent a year and a half in Manchester both at University (not very Rock and Roll) and working in an off licence. (Very Rock and Roll) As a result the band was put on ice until his return in December 1984. What it did do was give him the chance to write a stack of songs which were to form the next and most active phase of the band. It is also interesting to note that up to this point many of the songs are either quite abstract or existential in lyrical content with no particular political angle This is also true with contributions from Ian or Tim. This was about to change.

1985 What fun to be 21

Margaret Thatcher won the 1983 election while I was working on the Kibbutz. I never expected it. The Falklands war the year earlier was a lesson to all of us just how much this country censors its media and pumps out propaganda. On the back of the war even though she was doing badly on domestic issues and had 3 million unemployed she romped home. I don't think the 83 Labour Party manifesto was the longest suicide note in history, I think the electorate was duped on the back of the war. You meet a lot of people on the Kibbutz from different countries and my horizons were broadened. I also met a whole stack of Irish guys who put me right on a lot of issues going on in the North of Ireland which the British Media either never bothered to report on or censored. I came back from Manchester at Christmas 1984 to get a band together. The miners strike was still on and the miners used to come in from Bold Colliery to the bus garage in Manchester where I worked to get donations. I earned £62 a week and used to give them a tenner.

It's fair to say that myself and most of the members of Easter and the Totem are lower middle class boys in fact nearly all of us went to Langley Park School in Beckenham. You might ask me where my rage and anger comes from. It comes from the stinking times that we lived through, a Prime minister who was barking mad and a greedy money grabbing society that was out for itself. You can also add in that most of the music through the 80s was shit as well!

Welcome to 1985!
Mike Barry

Ideological Sounds

There was no real blueprint for Easter and the Totem other than to learn some songs, going play some gigs and see what happened. Rehearsals began in 1985. The line up was Mike Barry Guitar Vocals, Dave Pearton Bass, Chris Richardson Guitar, and Steve Mountain Drums. For a debut they played 3 numbers at a party in Shortlands one of which was the Green Fields of France. The first proper gig was at the Harp club (Now the Venue) New Cross 16th May 1985. The support band was called Hot Murder including Vic Reeves on vocals. Hot Murder were shit and were told so in no uncertain terms by Ian Cole and Rob MacInnes (Mac) two of the Totes most ardent supporters. Ironically Vic Reeves went on to have hit record's albeit with shit 60's covers.

Also the band recorded "Modern Romantic" and "At full stretch" at the Enid's studios in Cambridge. This was a pretty good session and became the first two tracks on The Sum is Greater than it's Parts. On the 26th May 1985 the

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band played the Rock Garden .This was Chris Richardson's second and last gig .They were joined once again by John Diver on Guitar. Throughout 1985 the band went on to play 21 gigs mostly in London. Mike was on the enterprise allowance scheme and was working full time for the band. One of the favourite venues of the band at the time was the Half Moon Herne Hill which was played 6 times that year. In addition the band played a great night at the Crypt in Deptford .The gig was switched from Chislehurst Caves at the last minute when the police threatened to shut it down. One rare excursion to Kent University set a familiar theme i.e. bored with London? It's road trip time. On the 16th August 1985 the Band played a benefit gig for the Bromley Unemployed group. This was to begin a long association with Tom Caldwell the organiser for the Unemployed group who also began Bromley Musicians Collective later to become South London Musicians collective. The gig at the HG Well Centre(The Labour Club) in Bromley was the scene of many a good gig until bands became banned by the Organising committee. These were good times for the band and when John Diver left to join a rival band in November 1985 (We were getting used to it by this time!) a solid live band had been achieved and a regular set established.

In addition at the back of an off licence in Bromley lay a recording studio imaginatively titled Bromley studios. It doubled up as a rehearsal studio. A lot of the engineers doubled up by working in the studio and in the off licence (A bit of a dream job really).It was here that Easter and the Totem recorded some their best known work.

1986,Keyboards,Tinitus & food poisoning!, and er recording the second album.

After Johns departure the band added Richard Morris on Guitar and Kevin Tweedy on Keyboards. This five piece line up was loud ,very loud. With this line up the totes now rehearsed and recorded at Bromley Studios with an Engineer and all round great bloke called Nigel Laybourne (who also often mixed the sound for the band live) .In March the band laid down three tracks: Distant generations, Stripped Down and Acid Reign three of the most popular from the live set. Also in one take at a late at night session in March the band recorded "Days After" the closing number to the bands set with additional guitar from Neil Braddock. Unfortunately Richard Morris got tinitus thought to be from the keyboards being put through the PA at a rehearsal (the rest of the band presumably being too deaf to be affected) and had to bow out after a handful of gigs. Neil Braddock filled in on guitar an additional drums live.

Bizarre highlight of the year included a performance at the Penge Festival in May where Mike gave the Tory Mayor dogs abuse for not showing up and also refereed a tug of war from the stage. The generator broke down half way through the set and the band turned around to seed a guy shouting "keep going" as he poured fuel into the petrol tank!. The day then continued with a gig at Thames Poly in Woolwich where Mike managed to throw up 2 minutes before going on stage due to a rather heavy dose of shellfish food poisoning.

There was also the bands debut at the Crystal Palace bowl free festival, one of 15 gigs played that year. On September 28th 1986 Mike moved in to 111 Brownhill Road ,Catford with his then girlfriend Susan Borthwick. For the next seven years this was to be the base of not only Easter and the Totem but the record Label Ideological Sounds.

The Sum is Greater than it's Parts.

Released in November 1986 "The Sum is Greater than it's parts" was the culmination of Easter and the Totems work to date. Mastered by Porky Prime cuts and pressed at Lyntone. It was the first release on the Ideological Sounds records label. It was initially a 500 pressing with an inner information sleeve. Once again the sleeve was designed by Bill Webb ,With a photo of the band playing at the Half Moon Herne Hill on the back.

The run out track contains a tape recording of a conversation in the house that Mike lived in in Manchester between two of his flat mates Paddy and Dave. Dave was supposed to be going on to be trained as a Priest hence Mike put it on as a wind up. Note that in the groove of the album is written "fame at last Dave". The politics of "Acid Reign" and "Distant Generations" are the first direct political songs about Mrs Thatcher and Ireland respectively while "Days After" was probably Steve Mountain's finest Totem moment as a drummer. It was probably a lot poppier than the band sounded live due to the time delay in releasing it. From the opening Morrissey send up "Modern Romantic" to the final track there is a blend of keyboards and guitars very rarely going over 3 minutes. In fact the nine tracks run in at 30 minutes 36 seconds. All in all a major development on the first album and a set of songs that sit well together. It was produced by the band and compiled by Nigel Laybourne. The West Nile Compilation Album "The Truth About South London" (West Nile 0009) contains a remastered version of the full album.

In 1997 once the band had attracted attention from Pinnacle records ,(the major indie distributor of the time) ,a further 500 were pressed with a leaflet supporting the Guildford 4 Campaign replacing the inner sleeve. The catalogue number was also changed to Totem 1 due to Earthworks label having the same reference. A thousand copies was a pretty good achievement for an independent label. Self produced and self financed with no Manager ,it is classic independent stuff. It is interesting that although certainly tapes were sent to major labels there was a natural assumption that they would not be interested in the style or lyrical content of the bands material. Neither did the band venture out of South London very much to gig. As a result they just did their own thing swimming against a mullet ridden, overblown ,record industry in perfect isolation.

These were Steve's Mountain's last recordings with the band and though he was to fill in a couple of times live following this, the major part of his drumming stint was over. He was due to play a gig at the Labour club on 29th December 1989 but cancelled because he broke his hand lamping someone who chatted up his girlfriend in a Bromley nightclub. With over 40 gigs and two albums to his credit he has every right to say that apart from Mike he was the mainstay of the band during these years.

1987 A state of Independence.

111 Brownhill Road was a damp, rat infested, one bedroom flat. There was very little space but there were a lot of good times to be had there. Ideological sounds was closely linked to Bromley musicians collective which had renamed itself South East London Musicians Collective due to Tom Caldwell moving his job to Catford Unemployed Centre. Tom was a great guy and did a lot for the musicians in the area. The collective got thrown out of the Tigers Head in Lee and Mike and Tom recommended the Black Horse in Catford. So it came to be that in 1987 Catford became the centre of the South East London rock universe! The collective also swapped gigs with a Medway Collective based in Chatham and the band played down there on several occasions

One product of the collective was that a 4 band compilation Lp was created. Easter and the Totem already had a distribution contract for the Ideological Sounds Label through Pinnacle records and were repressing the "The Sum is Greater than it's Parts". The best bands from the collective "Keeping up with the Reagan's", "Best foot forward" and Nigel Laybourne's early techno prototype "Cultural Thugs" all got together to make what became "Painting the Fence red". All the tracks were recorded at Bromley Studios and Easter and the Totem contributed "The Tyranny of Reason", "Greater Than Ourselves" and "Duplicity". The line up for this session was Mike Barry guitar vocals, Kevin Tweedy Keyboards, Dave Pearton Bass and Dave Pearce Drums. Nigel Laybourne engineered.

Dave had been recruited through the Totes playing alongside one of the bands he played in called Menticide. When they broke up he joined Easter and the Totem and played 15 gigs with the band that year. A very dedicated and powerful drummer he contributed immensely to the compilation album tracks and the three singles that the band would release of the next few years. The sleeve was designed by local artist Dani each band being given a quarter of the the inside sleeve insert to design themselves.

The three Totes tracks are a little thin in production with the vocals being mixed up to high. However there is no denying the quality of the songs especially "Duplicity" and "Greater than ourselves" being the most accomplished Totem works to date. Songs about nuclear war and Ireland don't often make daytime radio but there's no doubt they are subject matter

worth writing about. The album was released in July 1987 distributed by Pinnacle. All four of the bands played at a gig in the New Merlins Cave near Kings Cross. At this time the possibility of setting up the Label as a workers cooperative was floated and the necessary paperwork put into motion for to begin in January 1988.

Unfortunately musicians do not make the greatest of businessmen or bussinesswomen for that matter. Also to be fair they were concerned with making music rather than doing the business chores. Paul Smith of "Keeping up with the Reagan's" subsequent chart success as a guitarist in "Silver Sun" is proof of the point. However the compilation sold relatively well with all four bands using it as proof of the relative strength of the South London scene.

Late in 1987 Jocky Mundie joined the band on guitar. A good lead guitarist With a passion for Jimmy Hendrix the peak of the band was about to begin. The end of the year was busy for the band with appearances at the Rock Garden ,The Crystal Palace Bowl and one unique gig at Lewisham Labour club on Saturday 26th September. As mentioned before Mike had become involved in the Guildford 4 Campaign to free the people wrongly imprisoned for the Guildford and Woolwich Pub Bombings. In addition to the campaign leaflet (included with the repressing of The sum is greater than it's parts) Mike invited Teresa Smalee auntie of Paul Hill to speak at the gig.

To about 150 punks and assorted young people she told Paul Hill's story as they listened in silence to the true nature of the injustice.

As Mike says "you see that bit in the film "In the Name of the Father" where there's a big demonstration prior to the four being released ,Well that's pure fiction. The reality was that Teresa and Errol Smalley and others would address meetings with about 6 people in them. Ann Scanlon an Irish journalist on Sounds Magazine she publicised the gig but that was about the height of the publicity that the gig got. If I've ever done anything good in my life then it's being involved with the Campaign .I'm very proud that they were all eventually released but still angry at the injustice". The money we raised went towards his wedding in jail.

On a lighter note it's also the night of Jocky's "I'd simply die without Mahler incident". Contact Jocky for the details!!!

The final gig of the year was at The University of London Union .Some film footage shot by Dave Painter still exists.

1998 Have Ambition but don't forget to pay the Rent

1998 was a classic year for Easter and the Totem. The two singles they made only begin to do justice to a band that live was playing at its peak. The band began the year with Kevin Tweedy on Keyboards but although he played on the singles by March the Live Totem Line up consisted of Mike Guitar Vocals, Jocky Lead Guitar and Messrs Pearce and Pearton manning the rhythm section. It was felt that the band wanted to go back to the guitar based sound but Kevin's contribution to the singles should not be overlooked

The double A side single "Co-conspirator"/"Chasing the Whale" was originally going to be an EP, the tracks "Cheating world" and "Immortality" being recorded at the same time. In retrospect it's a pity it wasn't as the four tracks are some of the best-recorded best-played songs of that era. They were Recorded at Bromley Studios with Nigel Laybourne at the mixing desk and produced by the Band Recorded on a 16 track studio a limited edition of 500 copies were made. Mastered at Tape one and pressed at Orlake in Dagenham and given the catalogue number Totem 3. The sleeve was once again designed by Bill Webb with a great photo by Dave Tyrer (one of Dave Peartons Workmates.) shot at Greenwich. It was scheduled for release in March

Pinnacle suggested that Easter and the Totem should release a single with a view to gaining some Airplay. So rather than begin work on a third album the band began to make singles. By this time however Pinnacle were having financial difficulties. Many of the smaller Indie Labels with distribution deals were terminated through no fault of their own. Unfortunately following the Ideological sounds label setting up as a Workers Cooperative Pinnacle used this occasion to terminate the contact even though it was for two years stating that the nature of the business entity had changed. Legal opinion seemed to say that there was no point in suing and of course Rough trade and other distributors were faced with a queue of Labels of which Ideological sounds a as young label was at the back of.

This was a serious blow but with plenty of live work on the go, the pressing went ahead. By now the Totes were playing the Medway towns and a band favourite of Brighton (London on Sea!!) These out of town gigs got a better reaction than many on the London circuit and the audiences seemed to be much more receptive. In addition the hiring of a coach would give London based supporters the opportunity of a day out so gigs were often set on the bank holidays.

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In March the band played Beckenham Theatre, Woolwich Poly and The Old Vic in Brighton on consecutive nights. The single got a favourable review in Sounds magazine, which was pretty amazing really considering that the band had no publicist or marketing team. Sales at live gigs of the single were good but of course singles do not make as much money as albums. Had the distribution deal still been on the table sales might have gone into the thousands rather than hundreds.

Rob MacInnes filmed two of the three nights on video. The tapes show a band playing Material much more quickly than the recorded versions and a truly amazing version of "Days After" with Jocky doing a Hendrix style guitar solo out at the end. It was however a fantastic weekend and galvanised the band on to play more gigs and record. Seventeen gigs were played that year including 4 in Brighton.

Lewisham Council gave the Band a grant to do some recording provided that it was recorded in the Borough so the band used Live Air Studios in Catford. Three tracks were put down "Act of Faith", "Tombs of the Kings" and "Cuts both Ways". When the band returned to mix the tracks it was found that Cut's both Ways had been wiped from the Tapes. The recording on "The Truth about South London" is from a cassette recording of it, which gives some idea of the power of the track even in such a raw state. Tombs of the kings was mixed almost exclusively by Dave Pearce who concentrated on the Drums and this became the B-side of the next Single. The band was never happy with the mix of Act of Faith although tapes of it show a marked improvement on the version, which ended up as the "A" side of the next single.

As a result they went into Bromley Studios to record two more Tracks "Act of Faith" and a neo rockabilly number called "Some are More Equal than others."

By this time Jocky had left the band and had been replaced by a young guitarist called Conrad. Whatever happened during this session and maybe it was the attempt to make the sound heavier, the final mix is a poor one. The reviewer in Sounds recognised a really good song trying to get out but between leaving the studio and the single being pressed the sound quality disappeared. With limited finances it was impossible to go back and re-record it and as a result many people thought the B-side to be a far better track. Released in September 1988 with a sleeve designed by Jem Soar and a new Totes logo it still proved a popular seller at live gigs.

However the flurry of activity continued and new songs were written which would become the Time to go 12 inch Ep. The recording sessions began in December of that year in anticipation of the "Time to go" campaign for the following summer. This was a campaign marking the 20th anniversary of the Troops going into Northern Ireland led by Clare Short MP and the Labour Committee on Ireland.

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It was also Time for Dave Pearton to leave who's own day job made it increasingly difficult to find the time to give to the band. He can of course look back with pride at the records that he made and having been with the band for nearly 4 years, contributed a massive amount. He was replaced by Big Pete Milsom on Dave Pearce's recommendation and so it was that the band went into a 24 track studio in Plumstead in December 1998 with Nigel Laybourne. By coincidence it was just a couple of hundred yards down the road from where the band had played their first gig some 8 years earlier.

The three tracks recorded "Time to Go, "Thatcher's Kinder" and the Grand Remonstrance were bigger in sound thanks to the 24 track and the 12 inch single it was pressed on. They were also the most political that the Band ever made. In a record industry increasingly concerned with image and marketing it was an extremely brave move.

As Mike Barry Says:

"I am especially proud of that EP. Look at the words on the front sleeve and see how forward thinking the people involved in that Campaign were. At the time a lot of people thought we were mad IRA loving nutter's. Ten years later most people would accept what we said as being reasonable and measured. " Once again the political climate made me write what I thought not what I thought people wanted to here."

The recording was finished well in advance of it's August 1989 release date and the band finished up the year with a gig at the Woolwich Tramshed. They had achieved so much and looking back it's incredible to look at the development. It's a pity they didn't get more success and coverage although they were unlucky not to do so. That said they were never very likely to go bursting into the charts with those lyrics and attitudes.

1989.Agit pop

After the heights of the previous year came a difficult transitional time only 11 dates were played but better quality and better paid ones. Much of the early part of the year was spent getting the money together for the single pressing. Rob MacInnes designed the sleeve based largely on the Time to go campaign poster. The mastering was once again done at Tape one in London with Pressing at Orlake. Five hundred were made. The Catalogue number was Totem 5. It's a very loud powerful recording 24 tracks and 12 inch grooves make a world of difference!

In addition an increasingly politicised Mike Barry was becoming more involved in politics having started a job working for the National Union of Railwaymen the previous year. A break up with his long-term girlfriend Susan Borthwick in April didn't help matters financially. Says Mike she said to me "your music comes first, your politics second and I'm the poor third look me in the eye and say it's not true "You can't' really answer that can you .I can hardly blame her for moving out. I had overstretched the budget and could barely afford the rent on the flat .It took my Mum and Dad (God bless them) to bale me out financially on the strict promise that no more records pressings were to be done until the debt was settled. A bit embarrassing considering that I was now 25.

Had we made an Album we would probably have been ok but singles only make about enough money to cover your next recordings leaving the Pressing Costs to be found. Fortunately "Time to go" was already pressed .In August of the year we got single of the week in NME. This was a bittersweet moment since we now had critical acclaim and publicity but no resources to go and promote the EP.

In September of 1989 Dave Lacy a friend of Mikes from Dublin came over to stay with Mike at the flat and also joined the band. Having very similar music tastes and having played bass with several bands in Ireland he slotted in well to the band. New songs were written and the year rallied with 6 gigs in the last two months. One of these gigs was an Ambulance workers benefit for the striking ambulance workers. (Yet another bitter industrial dispute of the late 1980's). This was held at Goldsmiths College New cross. Dave was back home on holiday so Big Pete Milsom filled in on Bass.

The support act was Dennis Skinner MP. Says Mike "I spoke to him and asked why he was speaking to the crowd early. He said to be honest the band on next are just too fucking loud for me. This of course was Easter and the Totem. Considering he had worked down a coalmine I thought it was pretty hilarious. Maybe pop and politics don't mix after all."

It was a good way to close out the 80s.A bitter decade that Easter and the Totem reflected in their music and their lyrics. From rough beginnings to accomplished performers they had come a long way.

Ready, steady, go, 1990 to,1993

For the last three years Easter and the Totem played as a three piece sometimes with Jocky Mundie on Drums when Dave Pearce was not available. In May 1990 Mike Barry was elected a Councillor for the London Borough of Lewisham. Three meetings a night four days a week narrowed down the chances to play and in three years just under 20 gigs were played as a band although Mike played solo at places like the Mean Fiddler Acoustic room and locally in New Cross and Deptford

As a three piece the band needed no sound check and could turn up and play at the drop of a hat. One such night was the 25th March 1992 when the The three piece Supported "Squeeze" at the Amersham Arms, New Cross. Says Mike "It was packed with people and the place was jumping I don't think we ever played better in our entire career."

Earlier that week On 21st March 1992 the band went into Live Air Studios in Catford to record 4 tracks. "When I came Here", "The Smoke", "Sick Man of Europe" and "The South bank Shantytown". Mike Barry played guitar and sang Lead vocals. Dave Pearce played drums and Dave Lacy played bass and sang backing Vocals.

As a recording it's the best sung, best played, best produced, and best-written set of songs that Easter and the Totem ever produced. It should have been released as an EP. This was the band at its most Irish sounding and the lyrics are classic social realism with less propaganda than "Time to go". The songs can be found on: www.peoplesound.com/artist/easterandthetotem and the track "South Bank Shanty town" can be found on the Compilation "The Truth about South London"

Dave Painter also filmed a video of the South Bank Shanty Town in London on the day of the Poll Tax Riots. It's a pretty hard-hitting piece of film a kind of "Streets of London" for the Nineties.

On the 1st October 1993 Easter and the Totem performed for the last time at the Broadway Theatre ,Catford It was a low key affair but a lot of fun was had running through numbers that they hadn't played for a long time and also some cover versions. Nearly 11 years since they played their first gig had passed. A lot of great times and a lot of great memories.

On the 13th October 1993 Mike moved to Glasgow and the band was no more. With his relocation expenses he went out and bought a new guitar.



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SEL CANTO 'White-Out Conditions' (Crammed Discs) These interesting and that's not an insult) Norwegian music-makers are no doubt prepared for the inevitable barrage of Cocteau Twins references that'll be coming their way when folks hear they've got an unusual-sounding female singer and a winking acoustic melancholy.

In reality, they're quite nice, and also rather odd.

THE WEATHER PROPHETS 'Always The Light' (Creation) Nice one, nice message, nice phone break from nice horrendously overrated pop-rockers.

DRUG 'Nevil Wanless' (Our Mam's Records) Oddball offering from Middlesbrough outfit seemingly intent upon demolishing the evils of modern British society by pushing them out of existence. Four tracks: 'Van With Wreath' tackles tedious modern architecture, 'House Of In (Yankee From Lansk)' has a go at utilitarianism (with the phasis on Poland), 'No Ill Games' snaps at bleak planning, and 'Stephen's Birthday' is about football. Well, why not? Drug's prickly lyrics and risky political stance

style — punk rock, oh yes indeed, but deliciously fine pop music too.

The freshest raunch in town, with shirt and trousers to match.

remind me of brilliant early Membranes and Yeah Yeah Noh, and I, Ludicrous to a degree. But alas, the music is childlike without being charming, ramshackle without being rugged.

A few decent tunes and this lot would be a force to be reckoned with.

NASA 'Shah Shah' (Fun After All) Completely ridiculous, a nonsensical Far East-meets-heavy metal mish-mash that seems to be getting its wires well and truly crossed in regard to the current Asian pop mini-upsurge.

Imagine it, the worst HM riffing in the world and a large, runny slab of Turkish Delight. Bilious.

TIFFANY 'Feelings of Forever' (MCA) Remember those Cindy Doll adverts you used to get on the telly a few years back? Glamorous Cindy as horse-rider, air hostess, beautiful bride, debutante, pop singer...

Yes! Tiffany is that Cindy Doll, standing motionless but dazzling beneath the swirling disco lights, her hair luxuriant, her outfit up-to-the-minute, the expression on her face frozen somewhere between enchantment and a puzzled frown.

A sharp tug of the string at the back and, hey presto, Tiffany sings! (Pop costume and batteries not included.)

IRON MAIDEN 'The Evil That Men Do' (EMI) Phew! A nice surprise to find that, when ripped from the current album's excruciating context, this fiery little belter bursts into life with an intensity previously unheard.

All the Maiden trademarks are here: galloping bass and drums, soaring twin guitar harmonies... perfect pulse-racing melodrama, short and to the point.

A singles band, maybe?

JAMES DEAN DRIVING EXPERIENCE 'Dean's Eleventh Dream' (Autumn Glow) Dreamy black 'n' white Claudia Cardinale picture on cover promises miracles, but the only remotely magical aspect of this floaty '60s dip is a splendid Byrds-type twangy solo at the end. At least their hearts are in the right place.

BROTHER BEYOND 'The Harder I Try' (Parlophone) Behind whose angelic young faces you'll find weasling away the notorious Scurvy/Avarice/Wormonger songwriting team — scourge of a nation. Shoot on sight.

(I HAD SEX WITH) JOHN MERRICK'S REMAINS 'Blood On The Rocks' (Nail) Sounding nothing like Tiffany, this wittily named Doncaster band turn out to be spot on in the literary department (they know where the apostrophe goes in Merrick's) but, sadly, their stab at synthesised noise terror falls as flat as a pancake.

EASTER AND THE TOTEM 'Act Of Faith' (Ideological Sound) Surprisingly meaty pop-rock with, apparently, a message. I say apparently because the words are lost, for the most part, in the pea soup production. Shame.

MEN OF COURAGE 'Cold Winter' (Far Out) The sleeve, with its pictures of serious young men wearing black and standing in

the man of her dreams.

Lisa Carter's re-work is nothing but a sham.

TOKYO 'Listen To Your Heartbeat' (GWR) Good time rockers caked in make-up blow their chances of writing a pop metal masterpiece by unconsciously (we presume) ripping off The Kids From Fame's 'Hi-Fidelity' and simply adding a raunchy guitar solo for that stamp of ganoid authenticity.

Not a record one feels inclined to describe as "great".

SCHOOLLY D 'Smoke Some Kill' (Jive) Now that rap's been mastered by everyone — from Tim Brooke-Taylor and Dennis Norden (Radio 4 fun-quizzes) to publicists at just about every bank in the land (Whew! Yeah! Opening a current account with us is well bad!) — isn't it about time that this tedious fad was killed off?

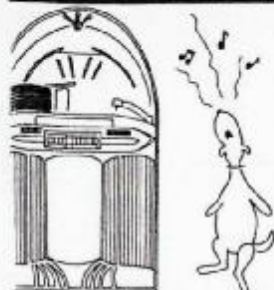
Politically a damp squib, but musically every bit as potent as Chinese water torture.

THE WILDHOUSE 'Let's Get Married' (Uh Huh!) Talk about misleading names, The Wildhouse are about as wild as... um... Siouxsie And The Banshees? No, better make that Perry Como having a nap by the fireplace in a mountain shack after his Sunday dinner.

Wimp rock for boys who discovered punk rock in '85 and inexplicably surmised that Johnny Rotten changed the face of rock 'n' roll in carpet slippers.

SISTER RAIN 'Burt Reynolds' (Serene) A pop song of reasonable quality, not too fey, not too jingly-jangly, pleasantly wistful but let down by weak vocals.

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Featured this week are singles by Boys Wonder, The Soup Jons, The Robert Cray Band, My Bloody Valentine and Maiden





LYLE LOVETT: don't call him sexist!

nowhere if not divided. On one hand he's been hailed as the greatest thing since Dolly button badges, on the other he's been decried as a blatant sexist. The new men of this parish have waved their feminist flags at the despicable storyline of 'Walk Through The Bottomland'.

Admittedly, Lovett's had some dodgy moments ('She's Hot To Go' being the worst) but to condemn a song like 'Walk Through The Bottomland' is to misunderstand the whole genre of country.

Here, Lovett is essentially an observer, detailing the longstanding relationship between a New Jersey 'lady' (the most objectionable word in the song) and a wayward cowboy. Lovett neither patronises nor condones, but simply listens to the begrudgers bitch "she ain't no good" as she chases her elusive dream across the bottomland to his grave.

'Walk Through The Bottomland' is a bittersweet country song to be enjoyed by men and women alike, and coupled here are the velvet harmonies of Emmylou Harris and the added bonus of Lovett's 'Simple Song'. This single is a classic of its kind. Those searching for serious sexism will find it elsewhere.

Temptations hit which he co-wrote with Barrett Strong. Nobody can argue with a great song but here it's reduced to a synthesised, soulless smooch.

By the same token, Natalie gives Bruce's 'Pink Cadillac' the electro-treatment and comes up with a version that is less objectionable and far more listenable.

SOMETHING HAPPENS! 'Burn Clear' (Virgin)

Having recently warmed up the nation for All About Eve, Branson's latest Irish hopes have been pushed forward from the soundtrack to *The Courier* and leave us with a noise that is almost as exciting as the movie itself.

MEGA CITY FOUR 'Miles Apart' (Primitive) Packed in a white polythene bag, MC4's marketing values are as vague as their production, but neither detract from the vinyl itself.

With a loud chorus of thrashing guitars, rollicking drum rolls and a chorus of "hey! hey! hey!" — choruses, they've stuck their fingers firmly on the punk pulse and brought power, pop and teenage kicks to Hampshire.

THE CRICKETS 'Your M-M-Memory' (Rollercoaster)

Thirty years after the initial attack, The Crickets wave goodbye to the past and make a lacklustre job at the future. The second gear chug of 'Your M-M-Memory' is probably as much as we can expect from their rockin' face these

HOOTERS 'Johnny B' (CBS)

Currently garnering all sorts of kudos Stateside, 'Johnny B' is the biggest disappointment of the week. A promising intro and intermittent harmonica don't stave off the ineffectual rock drift, and listening to their standard stomp through The Beatles' 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds', all your worst fears about Hooters are confirmed.

EASTER AND THE TOTEM 'Co-Conspirator'/'Chasing The Whale' (Ideological Sound)

Given the shallow shopping sounds of the moment, Easter And The Totem will do themselves few favours by attempting to stick politics into pop. The bitter rock rhythm of 'Co-Conspirator' is tempered by 'Chasing The Whale' which sees a resigned vocal struggle against a tide of guitar, keyboards and drum rolls as the good ship Totem sails through dreams, delusion and despair.

PENELOPE'S WEB 'Four Track EP' (MTG)

Impressive debut from the Midlands. 'The Gap' is a stark love-will-tear-us-apart song which sees Dominic Silvani's taut vocal struggling but failing to allay the ghost of his past and present. Here the

mood is enhanced by acoustic guitar and keyboards, but elsewhere — most notably on the closing 'Little World' — it's a wayward saxophone that dictates the pace.

CLANNAD 'White Fool' (RCA)

Although it's been lifted from last year's 'Sirius' LP, 'White Fool' does not appear to have had the States nor mega-bucks in mind. It's considerably less brazen than most of their recent material with Maire's vocals — backed here by tribal chants and drumming — repossessing the ineffable quality that made 'Harry's Game' so haunting.

Were there a tappable market in Australia then it would probably do wonders there, but you can't help thinking that it's 'Many Roads', from the B-side, that would be more likely to chalk up a St Patrick's hit here.

IRON MAIDEN 'Can I Play With Madness' (EMI)

STATUS QUO 'Ain't Complaining' (Vertigo) Mega money-spinning monsters of rock Maiden are warming up for Donington with a new LP 'Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son'. Here they present the world with a slice off said record, which amounts to a mighty metal mix of hell, fire, crystal balls and all the

usual old tosh.

Status Quo have been gracious enough to confine their wizardry to the studio and come up with a brave attempt to revamp their sound. 'Ain't Complaining' scores high on the novelty monitor — with 'there's nothing left (pause) there's nothing right' even coming out of the appropriate speaker — before Quo descend into more tried and Top Ten winning ways.

ROKY ERICKSON & EVILHOOK WILDLIFE (ET)

(Fundamental) How pitiful it is to see the once great rocker-cum-folk-weirdie Roky Erickson heading for re-election with a Texas troupe called ET. Here, the ailing one rasps in vain for love and a quarter decent sound.

THE ABS 'Turbosphinct EP' (Vinyl Solution)

Incredibly crass cover, tasteless title and substandard Viz pseudonyms like Boggs and Fatty Ashtray fail to detract from this Newport quartet who merge the primary colours of bass, drums and guitar into a persuasive punk thrash. 'Same Mistake Twice' is worth particular note, being fast, funny and literate enough for them to print all the lyrics without embarrassing Boggs.

THE MEN THEY COULDN'T HANG 'The Colours' (Magnet)

Flaunting the Republican flag, the men that time almost forgot make a full-throated grab for the charts with a brazenly produced take of battle, blood and Bonaparte.

It's a shame that they've

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Sheldon from Gate Crash: BROTHER in arms.

45s

REVIEWED BY STEVEN WELLS SINGLES OF THE WEEK

BLACK RHYME ORGANISATION TO HELP EQUAL RIGHTS: Beyond

EASTER AND THE TOTEM: Time To Go (Ideological Sound)

ZEKE MANYIKA: Runaway Freedom Train (Parlophone)

FARLEY JACKMASTER FUNK & THE HIP HOUSE SYNDICATE: Free At Last (Champion)

We've gone (in ten years) from a righteous bordering on moralism where any racist or sexist dickheadery was slammed, screamed down and shat on, to a stage where so much of the good music is made by dickbrains (Tone Loc, Ice T, Guns N' Roses, PWE!) that a verminous turd can attack "immigrants" and "faggots" and is allowed to get away with the most fatuous and weak excuses made since Jack Ruby whined Honest Guv! It just went off in my hand!

But positive pop don't mean shit if it don't kick ass. The Black Rhyme Organisation place both feet firmly up the donkey's rectum. This is a

POWERFUL record. The London Rhyme Syndicate, Overlord X, London Posse, The Cookie Crew, Freshki, Demon Boyz, Gate Crash and Bernie "off the pigs!" Grant take turns at the mike to slaughter apartheid over one hell of a clear, concise and, er, HAPPENING is the word I believe, backing track.

This is MONSTROUS STUFF. Of all the contributions, London Posse's patois has the best politics: "In a South Africa whole heap a shequies a grown boy no man no black man make a trade union... whilst the brilliant Cookie Crew deliver an emotive attack on "latcher" for not delivering SANCTIONS NOW!

The most fun lyric comes from LRS who declaim, "Exploiting my brothers through colour, racist bluffer/Botha in a Bodybag, word to the mother" which not only nails the US import of separatism which seems to have infected British rap in recent months but also gives us a great name for a speed metal band. Botha in a bodybag - start fraying! But wait - we ain't even half way through. We also get Ippick, The She Rockers, Junior Sam, MC Hello, Standing Ovation, Trouble and Bass and Hijack.

This has to be British Rap's proudest moment.

Easter And The Totem obviously put their music where their mouth is in a single that publicises the Time To Go campaign. I only wish I could say that their music was anything other than rather ordinary. Britain's troops have been oppressing the Catholic community in Northern Ireland for two 20 years now, and that's 20 years too long.

Both Farley Jackmaster Funk and Zeke Manyika deliver solid anti-apartheid messages if through vastly different musics. FJF calls for the release of Nelson Mandela with a brisk and breezy rap whilst Zeke adopts a laid-back Britpop reworking of the Freedom Train metaphor. Both brilliant but I've got to go with the Funker. It seems strange that the NME sells in South Africa whilst most of the records reviewed in this section probably won't make it past the censor (even though Jerry Dammers' superb "Free Nelson Mandela" penetrated successfully enough for it to be picked up and used as an anti-apartheid chant in the townships).

So - just for the censor (who even as you read this has his scissors poised over a massive stack of NMEs) - BLACK WORKERS TO POWER! There's one more bit for you to cut out, scumbag.

POP WILL EAT ITSELF: Very Metal

Noise Pollution (RCA)

Knobhead Single of the Week!

Two new tracks from The Band

With No Shame adorn this slickly

packaged slab of... what? PWE!

have now moved so far from their

CBE origins and their "White Rap"

pretensions that they are without

any peers. "PWEisation" starts with

a beat box jerking off to the

rhythm of a screaming siren and

gets better. A total wall of sound

that has the sheer balls to suggest

that the solution to teen angst is

PWE!

An obvious ploy to corner the Moz market and one which has absolutely no chance of success (one hopes). We get remixes of "Def Can One" and the disgusting "Preaching To The Converted" but times (as loud as you can take it)

