

Party Fears

Woozy #5, 1994

David Gerard interviewed by mail by Iain McIntyre.

[As close to word-for-word as I could to the original article text in *Woozy #5*. Imagine it's got the intro and questions hand-written and the answers done on a manual typewriter.]

David Gerard, through his zine *Party Fears*, has been comprehensively and cuttngly chronicling the ups and downs and associated hi-jinks of the Perth independent music scene since 1985. As a fourteen-year-old suburban boy, *Party Fears* gave me one of my first notions that something better lay outside of the confines of the crappy commercial press and music industries and, along with *B-Side*, *DNA* and overseas zines like *Forced Exposure*, it opened up a whole new world of music for me and, no doubt, many others. Although in recent times issues have been few and far-between, *Party Fears* is soon to return with a new issue, due out later this year. In the meantime, we thought we'd catch up with David to grab his thoughts on zines, Perth, the Universe and everything. His answers appear in the typeset of his trusty and weary typewriter.

Fourteen? Are you sure about this, Iain? Nice to know I'm corrupting youth, tho'. Away we go ...

1. What were your original goals in starting up a zine? Nearly ten years on, to what extent have you fulfilled them?

My original aim with *Party Fears* was to get a life — socially-inept virgin dweeb with large and growing record collection wanting to do something 'cool'. Edited the school student rag in yrs 11/12 and worked on the UWA paper *Pelican* in '85, so a zine looked the go. So I did PF#1 in Dec '85 and underwent a sudden and gruesome transformation into the dashing, witty, flamboyant cynical-old-man-about-town I am today.

When I started the zine, I declared to myself that it would have to be my individual idea of a good magazine. That's it. That's the bottom line. As it happens, that's just about the definition of a zine.

I find these days that one of the happier things I can do is write zine stuff and produce zines. The publishing functions (particularly getting money out of semi-criminal shops and distributors) are mainly an arse-pain, but the writing is ace fun. Social analysis is such a great Generation X pastime.

2. What rôle do you think *Party Fears* has played in the Perth independent scene?

- a. Standing up, pointing at bullshit and shouting, "THIS IS BULLSHIT!" is one I quite enjoy when the opportunity arises.
- b. Spreading the word that pure music-first art-Nazi ideals exist. If it's not art, KILL IT.
- c. Documenting the bands as they happen. The power of the press lies in using interpretation to shape

people's perceptions — first one to the article writes the first draft of history.

d. Being there. The kids are so grateful (the ones that remember ... aging ones) when a new PF comes out. You watch: a new one after two years and it'll be like I was never gone. (If I was there.)

3. Since you started PF, Perth has gone through successive waves of different bands and scenes — is there anything that's linked all of these people together? Is there really such a thing as the “Perth sound”?

Perth has a propensity for throwing up little bastard bands that aren't quite like anything anywhere; because there is no effective market/industry, there is no point even trying to sell out (unless you're a born loser), so bands develop in their own weird way. Then the weird little bastard bands cross-fertilise to whatever extent. Then they get pissed off and split up or leave town. The present “scene” does exist as a distinct entity and has done so since punk days. The Stems and Mustang! are from this planet; the Jackals or No Flowers No Wedding Dress are not.

The ‘Sound’: whereas bands previously suffered gratuitous Triffids comparisons for not sounding like a ‘rock’ band, they now suffer gratuitous Dinosaur comparisons for not sounding like a ‘pop’ band. A lot of it is just the feel of the place (as above); on the other hand, that isn't to discount any band's individual efforts towards a world-class sound of its own. So my answer is “sort of maybe.”

In the modern-day cyberculture, information flows everywhere with disconcerting ease, so the sense of mind-numbing isolation is lessened as compared to the '70s or early '80s; but Perth is still the sort of place you basically make your own fun and can't be much of a consumer. Most “Perth is boring” whinges come from those brought up by television.

4. A few years ago, you changed PF's format into more of a regular newsletter. What were the advantages of that, and why did you wind up dropping the idea?

Advantages were immediacy, it creates a buzz, opportunity to publicise *real* music and the fact that it is encouraging to see! I started it as a “howdy” newsletter and it worked so well I decided to do it for all of 1991. Then I got a full-time job. This left me with *no time*, but enough money to make up for it. (Sorta). What a rollercoaster ride that year was.

The trouble with working was no time to chase ads, which is why #16 and #17 are eight pages each; the zine was becoming a money-pit and I was getting exhausted, so I took a break and #18 came out in April '92 with a \$1.00 cover price. This issue wasn't available outside Perth because shops and small-major “indie” distributors are total pricks to get your money out of when you're thousands of miles away. Which is completely *fucked*, but that's life.

I still think a freebie is a tremendously good idea if it can be supported. BUMS (Bris) came out *fortnightly*. (And went much broker. But still.)

6. In the last few years, production of PF has slowed down to a trickle of often hilarious and damning one-pagers. How come things have slowed down and what's your future plans for the zine?

I'll answer this one out of sequence as it follows on. #16½ (Nov '91), the rock awards special issue, was originally a letter to Robert Brokenmouth, but I thought people might be interested. They were. (See answer 2c. above.) #18½ (Autumn '93) came from internal pressure of need to *do* something. Why did it

slow down? I got a life; had fun; stayed in bed for six months; didn't answer my mail in 1992; watched television; read books; didn't listen to new music much ... #19 is in the works (I'm doing actual *work* on the bugger) and I hope #20 will follow soon after it. I basically expect to be zining forever.

5. Ross Chisholm has published a variety of Perth band family trees in PF — is he still doing them and is he still talking about doing a book?

Yes and yes. The next one to be published in PF will be the *Jacuzzi International* collection (Mustang!, Baked, O!, Worm Farm and so on) and will conclusively prove the Stool Pigeons to have been the band with the most potential in Perth's history, weird and disgusting as that may seem. The book is still in progress — Ross has just about decided on all the trees he wants to do, and is now filling in gaps, fixing errors, doing proofs, updating ... it's one of those things you don't ask when it's going to be FINISHED. "Finished" is a relative term in such cases, anyway.

7. What have been the best and worst aspects of doing *Party Fears*?

Best: meeting people, getting mail, doing something worth doing, being a social moth, expressing my opinions in public, stirring shit and the fact that I'm still a scene-king without having done a proper issue in two years. Which is sort of sad for Perth, but you knew Perth was sad.

Worst: gathering ads, getting money owed, transcribing tapes, Macintosh access — the pigshit-shovelling. But it's basically pretty cool; even transcription is okay done straight into the computer.

8. A few years ago, you had a run-in with the Perth music industry at their WAMI awards. Can you briefly tell us the story again, for those readers outside Perth who wouldn't have heard what happened? Have you suffered any repercussions as a result of pointing out to those people what kind of parasites they are?

You mean the *pig-fucking* sort? I think this is *too* long ago to worry about really, but if you care to ask me ... I got up to accept a Golden WAMI Award (to PF: for service to the industry?!) and said a few words on what the industry had done for music in this town. Yep, felt good. Not sure the story can be told briefly — our Original Music Awards in 1986, collapse of the cover band industry in 1987, my own time on the WARMIA (now WAM) committee 1988-90 (I was one of those responsible for getting a Rock Awards up and running again from '89), the judging room for the 1991 awards just happening to be stacked with scenesters ... that if I hadn't let rip with what I *really* thought, I'd have been lying by omission ... I refer PF#17 (available for an SASE) if anyone really cares.

Will I ever do lunch in this town again? The only repercussion I heard about was that WAM couldn't get sponsorship for the '92 awards from the six major labels — as "punishment" (that was the word used) for letting me say what I had to say. But you knew freedom of speech doesn't apply in owned environments.

What you have to remember is that there is a bunch of ripoff cowboys who have branded themselves the "Music Industry" as if a collective name gives them social cachet. They are pimps and their aim is to whore music out, letting music have ten per cent of the take in exchange for its life. Without the Music Industry, music might exist. They'll do lunch with *anyone* if there might be a buck in it.

Most annoying 'opinion' I get is from young semi-industry folk who tell me it was a "real stupid thing to do." If my aim is to build a resume, maybe ... unlike them, I don't think the truth is relative to my position in the music machine. Fuck these people.

All this is a non-issue by now; it's 2½ years ago and I should have to do something new to get attention, like a great new issue of PF or something.

9. Tell us the best and worst gigs you've ever caught in Perth.

Ever? There's way too many to say. I've been to zillions of great gigs and zillions of sucky ones. But even at my advanced age, my favourite reason to leave the house is still to see a band.

10. What interview are you happiest to have done and who would you like most to interview?

Favourite: I was quite thrilled to interview Tom Ellard of Severed Heads (#17), as I've been a fan since whenever. The long Kim Salmon one (#10) was cool. Dave Graney too (forthcoming).

Most-wanted: I've always thought Mark E. Smith would be interesting, if we spent a day or two. And I had the complete Fall lyrics to prepare with.

11. What are you up to nowadays musically?

Was jamming with someone in 1993, but he was more interested in hangovers; good rehearsal tapes, but. Haven't found *that* guitarist yet. Music-playing isn't presently a high priority, but I am still interested.

12. How do you feel about the encroachment of major labels/big business into the independent scene both in Australia and overseas?

The bottom line is the effect on the music itself: too many cooks involved in the broth — that there are way too many people with a say in the record, all of whom care much more about their mortgage than your music*. See above re: pimp-cowboys. Beware, though, 'cos indies can be even bigger cowboys; and indie crooks are even more objectionable than major crooks because they *do* understand what music can be. The same obstacles are everywhere.

* credit to Dave Lang (*Year Zero*) on this one.

13. Who would you cite as your major influences/inspirations writing-wise?

B-Side: the first music magazine I ever read that was pure *music* without social conscience, politics, Smash Hits-style pop-scene silliness or any other bloody thing mixed in. Incredibly refreshing.

DNA: One Saturday in November 1985 I bought DNA #44 and 45, and they showed me that presentation is *zero* — it's *all* in the content. DNA is pure information with no layout, but it works fine.

ZigZag: a monthly magazine with *extreme enthusiasm* for the music it talked about. Which was sucky goth, but that's not the point.

Forced Exposure: for putting that art-Nazi vibe purer and clearer than I'd ever seen it before: defining a point and securing it. Inspirational.

XPress: the joy of writing for them in '88 and '89. There's nothing like getting home at 1:00am pissed out of your brain and having to turn scrawled notes into a gig review *right there and then* (while you still remember what little you do of the show) for the deadline the next morning, finishing the second draft (no more, 'cos if you do anything subtle or sensible the editor will fuck it up anyway) and driving out to the office around three to stick it under the door (there's no way you'll get up at eight to get it in first thing) for building up those writing muscles. And then having them not run it and hence not pay you so it was all pointless for building up those 'fuck-you' muscles. Though I'd presently be happy to whore my pen out to anyone who'll pay on time and not piss me around (S. Howlett, M. Dwyer).

I'm real glad I didn't read any Lester Bangs until I got the book in 1990, by when I'd developed my writing style; and that I'd read a ton of bad Coleyisms before I sighted a *Forced Exposure*.

14. What advice would you give to future generations of fanzine creators?

"Don't confuse yourself with someone who has something to say" — Mark E. Smith. If you know *why* you're doing it, you'll never go wrong. Putting forth an individual vision (or a number of individual visions) is the point of a zine. Don't let anyone else tell you what you "should" put in your zine. Every good new zine only strengthens the field.

Get ideas from any zine at all. Find a good format and steal the bloody thing! You'll develop your own style soon enough. *Persist* is the watchword.

You don't need a computer, but that should be no news to any *Woozy* reader. Content first every time. If you have anything to say of value, it'll be apparent.

A photocopier is a distinct help — if you don't have friends or relatives with access, universities and TAFEs have good copying cheap or at-cost. (Learn peak times, though.)

Don't be an arsehole. Don't piss people around. Maintain your integrity. Don't even be a deadshit.

25% of cover is the going rate for shop's cut. That's what newsagents get on magazines, that's what shops get on *Party Fears* or *Lemon*. Any shop demanding more for *any* reason are ripoff agents. (Any shop disagreeing is welcome to write and argue.)

Crap zines are way too easy to do. Don't do a zine — write for *Juice* or *In-Press* instead like you *really* want to.

Anyone who wants the whole PF available-back-issue pile should write to me at PO Box 89, Northbridge 6865; A\$5 postage on the lot (US\$5 overseas). PF#19 in the shops soon or now, but I don't know the price yet. It (and I) may even get out of Perth. Cheers.

[[Party Fears](#)]