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MEXBOROUGH PISTOLS

YORKSHIRE PUNKS HOBBIES OF TODAY WERE TIGHTER THAN MAGGIE THATCHER'S MILK BUDGET, BUT IT TOOK ALMOST FOUR DECADES FOR THE WORLD TO HEAR IT. BY KEVIN HOBBI

It's summer 1975 and Kevin Hobbi is bored.

The initial excitement of early 70s glam from the likes of Bowie, Bolan, Roxy and the NY Dolls seems to have stalled. So Kevin and his school chum Stuart Holie decide, like so many other bored teenagers, to form a band. In the desolate post-miner's (1972 and '74) strike town of Mexborough, South Yorkshire, there's fuck all else to do. No jobs and definitely no future. They buy their Woolies guitars and spend their weekends trying to emulate their glam heroes, badly. The only access to live music was the working men's clubs, where you had a choice of showbands with cheap glittery outfits, boy/girl duos trying to pay the mortgage, or occasionally the posing, long-haired rock bands doing covers of The Stones, The Who, Purple and, if you were lucky, an optimistic rendition of Hendrix.

Kevin and Stuart were joined by guitarist Steve Jones (no, not that one) and Martin Allt on drums, and The Electric Sect was born. The band started to rehearse the usual rock classics hoping to join the Son Of A Bitches (later to become Saxon) of clubland. Then in the winter of 1976, fate stepped in. Kevin and Stuart went along to the Thurnscoe Hotel, a pub in a broken town which had inexplicably started putting real rock bands on. That night the band was The Strangers, playing the loudest, rawest, most aggressive music Kevin had heard in years, and they didn't look like stars either, they were, well, real. So, you didn't have to be Eric Clapton, and you didn't need the music industry to be a real band; to Kevin, that was a revelation.

A few weeks later that experience was reinforced when Kevin saw the Sex Pistols at the Outlook club in Doncaster. A watershed moment for Kevin; he knew there and then what he wanted to do.

By late '76 Kevin and Stuart were joined by drummer David Exciting (later of The Vye), their name changed to The HOT, which morphed into The Hobbies Of Today, and a new set of original songs were rehearsed.

The band's first gig was at Huddersfield University to a hall of confused students, swiftly followed by their hometown debut at Rawmarsh Working Men's Club where the band got an enthusiastic reception from the audience of miners! Finding venues for a "punk" band doing original music in early '77 was difficult, so the band continued to play any venue that would have them – clubs, pubs, art centres, universities, even Scout huts. They never got paid of course, but at least they were playing, and playing their own stuff.

In early '77, in true DIY, punk fashion, Kevin decided to record and release their own independent single. Three tracks were recorded: RU12 (Kevin's prophetic take on where punk was heading), Piss On You and Vendor Of Visions. The master tape

was duly dispatched to Anglia Pressings for a run of 1,000 singles and everyone waited, trying to keep the anticipation from running riot. Then, disaster: Anglia went bust and Kevin never saw the records, the master tape or his money again.

The band carried on playing throughout 1977, but Kevin was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the way punk was being assimilated into the music business, and was fast becoming just another fashion fad. In late '77 the first version of Hobbies Of Today split, and in early '78 Kevin and Stuart recorded The HOT set acoustically at Planet Studios (a four-track in David Moffitt's garage). Those recordings were released that summer under the name of Pagan Bo on an LP entitled *Traditional Bard And The Future Inevitable*, with just 250 copies made on Planet Records. Kevin continued playing those songs live as Pagan Bo supporting Eyes At Risk, for whom he played guitar as well.

In early 1979, Kevin re-formed Hobbies Of Today, with Stuart on Bass, Steve Rose on drums and Gar-Eth on synthesizer, becoming one of the bands at the forefront of the emerging Sheffield electronic scene. They recorded two tracks, Metal Boys and Tightrope Walker, which they released on their own HOTWAX label, finally. Hobbies Of Today continued to play and release their own records throughout the 80s, but remained on the periphery.

The original RU12 recording from 1977 was rediscovered by Sheffield scene stalwart Jon Downing, and was finally released in 2014 on the HOTWAX label. *Record Collector's* Single Cream voted it into the Top 11 releases of 2014: recognition at last! HOT are still playing and are currently recording a new single, GOD-Growing Old Disgracefully, still full of the original spirit of punk – and still on the outside looking in...

