



GOthic

ROCK

**All you ever
wanted to
know...**

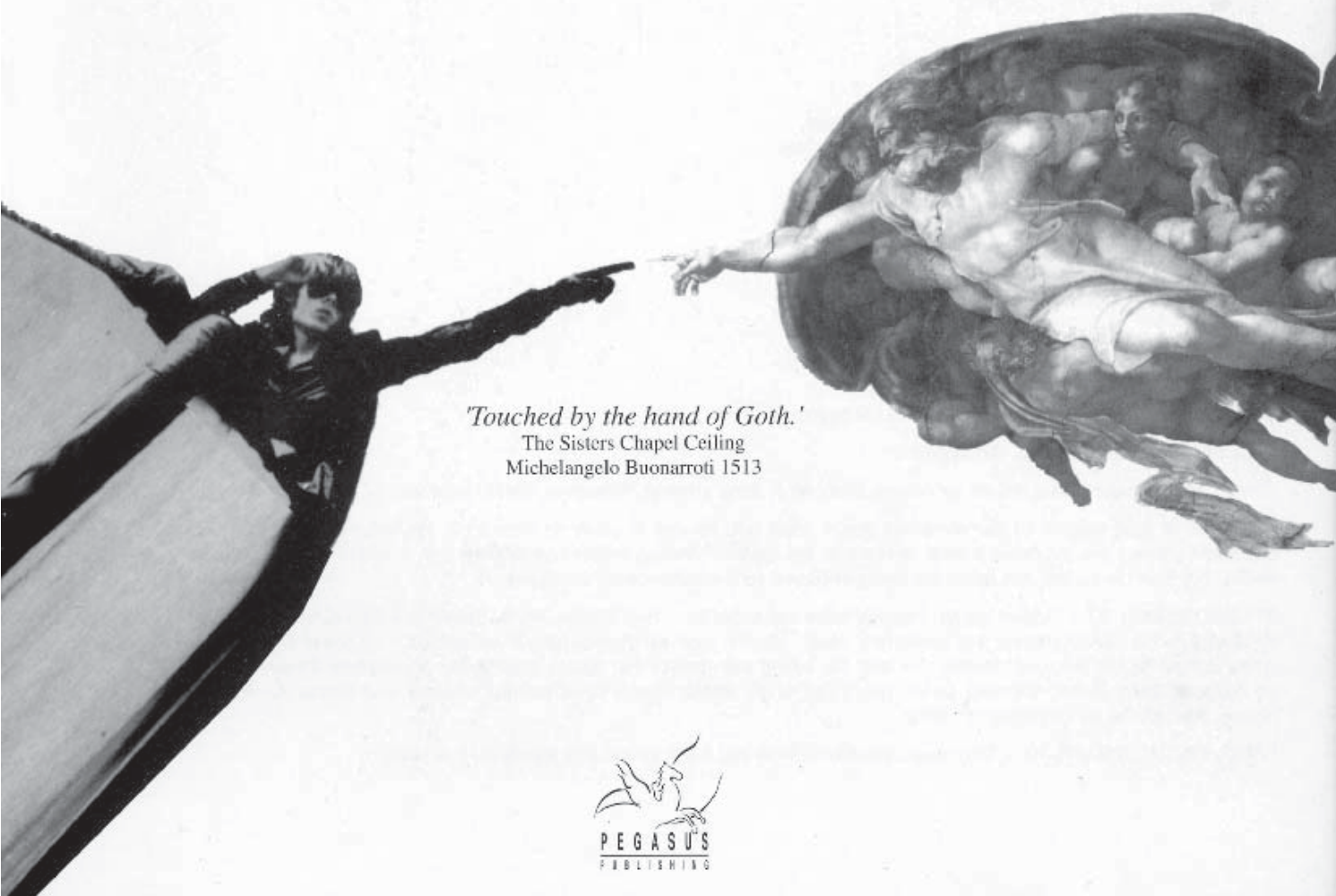
**...but were too
gormless to ask.**

Mick Mercer

GOTHIC

ROCK

by Mick Mercer



'Touched by the hand of Goth.'
The Sisters Chapel Ceiling
Michelangelo Buonarroti 1513



Johnny Ha-Ha



Yaxi



Mrs. Fiend



A quiet night in...

All four pics: Linda Rowell

question.

Nik: "We're the first ugly band in a thousand years."

The first single and album were produced by Youth (ex-Killing Joke and Brilliant).

Nik: "We didn't have a bass player so who better than a boss player to tell us whether it was OK? At first he'd refused, saying we were too mental but then changed his mind after a Heaven gig where the cross rhythms got to his brain!"

"Who's Been Sleeping In My Brain?" would turn a few heads in retrospect for its gnarled dance mangle - but also few bands ever transformed venues into mutant wombs of vast capacity the way The Fiend did. Again, ironically, the only comparison would be large scale indoor raves. They transformed the stage. Then stripped the walls of your mind bare.

Having already begun travelling across Europe, the Fiends ended 1983 with a visit to America. They've never stopped the transglobal toboggan ride ever since.

Nik: "New York was stunned and so were we. Lows? I don't think we had time to have any!"

Nowhere would be safe again!

1984 produced a vinyl avalanche, starting with tours - France, 6 weeks in North America (USA and Canada).

Nik: "Seeing the Aurora Borealis in Canada was an extremely amazing experience, the huge snowcovered rocky mountains, icicle caves you could stand inside of, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco - all the places we'd only read about. Low point was losing the 'Haunted Palace', our band home in North London 'cos we couldn't afford to pay the rent all the time we were away and we couldn't sign on the dot. So we got back from the States homeless and spent months on people's floors. It got very depressing."



1983, original line up.

"Johnnie Ha-Ha (a great man of the time)," they said proudly, "was one of the best or the best drummer we've ever known. There are drummers and there are drummers, and Johnnie Ha-Ha is a Drummer!"

Yaxi took over on drum machine as well as guitar and as a three piece they created

'I'm Doing Time In A Maximum Security Twilight Home', a single and album, which contains some of their most compelling work. Bleak, tautly wired, frightening and starkly confrontational it also - bizarrely - manages to jolly you along.

"I guess John's departure led us further into the use of drum machines and keyboard stuff," says Mrs Fiend, "to experiment and explore other aspects of music - simply because he would have been difficult to replace directly with another drummer at that time.

"Similarly, when Dave left (Spring '88) that led Nik into picking up a guitar and me into samples and drum machine. As a major aspect of Alien Sex Fiend has always been improvisation, you can't just add a guitarist or drummer - they have to be particular people who understand this and can develop a kind of musical telepathy, and believe me, not everyone can do it or fit in with us and our ideas."

They played one gig in Valencia outdoors to 8,000 people. An early rave godammit! 'Ignore The Machine' got re-released, and they scampered through Scandinavia, then surprised Spain early next year, as they moved to Ficknife Records and released in May the four track 'I Walk The Line' EP (currently re-released), notable for a mild cover of 'School's Out'.

A few more gigs in Spain and then they go into the embattled sonic landscapes of 'Smells Like....' on their own label, but through Cherry Red, Plague Records. Bowie liked it. Iggy even popped in. The single 'Smells Like' ran up the charts, despite the record being banned because of its dog turd cover. The 'IT - The Album' did likewise.

Nik: "Fab bit - 'IT' LP recorded over the summer. Bad bit - returning from tour in Europe the wheel fell off the band bus, we missed the ferry and had an enforced stay in a freezing cold miserable hotel in Vissengen, Holland with only a bag of crisps for our dinner (everything was shut). It was bleeding 'omble!"

The band tour Germany and at the end of 1986 something cataclysmic occurs - they are invited to support Alice Cooper on his UK tour.

Reunited on this tour with Youth, the man behind the desk on their debut single, brings about him producing their cover of Red Crayola's 'Hurricane Fighter Plane', and they get their new drummer, Rat Fink Jr, who goes all over the UK, France, Belgium, Holland and Spain with them, and out bobbles their breezy 'The Impossible Mission' single. Getting well done!

That was followed by 'Here Cum, Germs' (single), 'Here Cum, Germs' (album) and 'Stuff The Turkey' (single), wrapping up 1987 very, very neatly. In 1988 they do the one single, 'Bun-Ho', the album 'Another Planet' and a singles compilation album, 'All Our Yesterdays'. They're easing up a little?

"Working with Rat Fink and 'Doctor' Milton over a period of a few years, starting around 'Here Cum.



"Don't mess with us"

Fist - funky!



Pic: Linda Rowell

BATRACHIAM

Animals that discard gills and tails. (See Edrich.)

BAUHAUS

In all the colour and glamour, fuss and derision that accompanied this brief and fairly glorious career no-one ever really said they were clever or particularly artistic. Certainly the word 'fun' was never attributed to their activities... but look at them in the wider context of what they've done since and why, and then contrast that with the breast-beating loyalty many of their fans paraded. It doesn't add up.

What came first, the cheekbones or the egg? Did the posing interfere or dominate, was it a prime consideration? Clearly Peter Murphy was aware of the possibilities when he joined and already the musical nucleus had assessed its priorities. David Jay and Kevin Haskins were part of The Submerged Teeth in 1977 and The Craze - neither band lasted but when Daniel Ash entered The Craze everything changed. Pete Murphy trotted in and they became Bauhaus, a band without an image. Peter

Murphy looked decidedly Bowiesque when I caught them supporting Gloria Mundi at the Marquee, but having recorded 'Bela Lugosi' and found a deal with Small Wonder records, the single necessitated a sharp image, which was hardly a million miles removed from that of Eddie Maelor of Gloria Mundi. No more T-shirts, anyway. Bauhaus cracked out of monochrome into the indie charts where the single remained for an age and a half.

'Dark Entries', their second record came out on 4AD, and presented the stark death rattle rhythm and creepily poisoned vocals, offering a total contrast to the hissing



Pete's days as a tic-tack man were clearly numbered.

Pic: Steve Drury

hypnotism of 'Bela', and now the band were one of the best live bands in the country - a confrontational act in small venues. A total experience, as trousers filled with shocking speed. I've certainly never been as scared as when a rapier-thin Murphy darted into the crowd, three a breast between mirrored pillars at Billy's Club in Soho, grabbed me by the lapels and forced me backwards. In the grip of the sodding vampire mate! (PARP!) Took almost half a song to get him off me. There he was, within the light of the strobes shooting up from the floor, reflected images (to infinity), suddenly smashing mirrors with the microphone stand. A far cry from the punk rock haze of Gracie Fields. Ah, but I digress, and nostalgia's a chore and a bore. Why, only three years ago I was equally



Little does Pete realise, he has no horse.

Pic: Steve Drury



"Play badly again and next time it won't be your chin."
Pic: Andrew Davis