



'Pop Sensibility'

Blue Meanies

Radiant Future RF004 – download only, 22 tracks including 'Pop Sensibility' (see below for track list / store-link)

Martin Gordon writes:

It was 1977. I was in Riverside Studios in London's Hammersmith secretly replacing all the lead vocals on my band Radio Stars' debut album. I had decided, too late, that the vocalist wasn't up to it and had found a replacement who could have sung Robin Zander's laundry list and made it rock. We'd completed about half the replacement vocals when disaster struck. The management called: "Martin, you've got a hit, they want you on Top of the Pops this week". A disaster because it meant that I would be saddled with the current singer for the foreseeable future. Philosophically, though, I realised that they were right. So it was another four years before Chris Gent and I got together again musically, although I worked him into the Radio Stars live band on sax and backing vocals, and his contributions to the second Radio Stars album were sterling.

I met Chris when Radio Stars acquired the services of Steve Parry, a Canadian drummer living in London who played with a number of other bands. One of them, the Speedometers, featured the occasional services of Chris, whose regular job was with the Autographs. They were managed by one Jazz Summers, whose name will appear later in this story.

So following the demise of Radio Stars in 1980, Chris and I began to work together again. I had taken a brief sojourn in Paris working for Barclay Records as house producer, and my current project was a band called Angie. Led by a female singer of the same name - surely no coincidence - their main attribute was access to enormous amounts of cash due (apparently) to the relationship of the lead singer with a rubber-band manufacturing millionaire. He kept pumping money in, and the band kept taking it out. The ideal relationship, in fact, and I did what I could to contribute. Lord knows the music wasn't up to much, so I roped in my old pal Chris on sax and vocals and the band's guitarist Jon Grace roped in HIS old pal Hugh McDowell from the ELO and Wizzard. We all knew how to party and practiced frequently, in case we forgot.

All good things come to an end, and the Barclay Records period did as well. Chris and I returned to the UK and decided to have another go at a joint venture. I booked a

rehearsal room and stood in it alone. First man in was drummer Ray Weston, later with the Moody blues and today with the masters of widdley-widdley tum-ti-tum-ti-tum Wishbone Ash. He said later "When I saw that one guy, and a bass player at that, was auditioning for an entire band, I thought this guy is either bonkers or has clearly got something". He decided it was the latter, and I snapped him up, as he was (and still is) a great, powerful drummer with an acute sense of dynamics. Former Radio Stars guitarist Ian Macleod was invited, along with his thespian Richard the III haircut but, following one play through, he rather rudely declined the gig, saying "It reeks of Martin Gordon". He returned to his lonely milk-delivery round in Southend on Sea, where he remains to this day, a lonely enigmatic figure trudging up and down housewives' paths in the early morning, humming 'Pop Sensibility' to himself.

So it was Ray Weston's Scots pal Angie who provided guitar on the early 'Blue Meanies' demos. He would later become rather unreliable, insisting that the fretboard of his (electric) guitar be miked up in the studio, which produced, not unsurprisingly, an unusable buzzing noise rather like a comb and paper. He would also, when we began live performances, begin to play the following number before we'd finished the preceding one, most confusing for all. On one occasion, at London's Camden Palace, he disappeared from the stage. I spotted him at the bar, still strumming while ordering a beer and chatting to a friend. Clearly he had to go, and he was replaced by the redoubtable Tommy Willis. The blonde bombshell was another great, if unassuming, player and later turned up with Manfred Mann's Earthband, I believe.

Chris and I had recorded a few tunes around the time of the Radio Stars nosedive, and some of these were used to get us a recording deal. (Some of these (including 'Greenfinger' and 'Hit Him On The Head With A Hammer' I would later - much later - return to...). Ray Weston drummed and former Radio Stars drummer Jamie Crompton played guitar, before going off to join Suzy Quatro as rhythm guitarist and ballet dancer, if I understood correctly. We were also helped, if that's the right word, by my pal Gary Holton, at that time with the Heavy Metal Kids and later to become a TV star in 'Auf Wiedersehen Pet'.

Something of a 'character', Gary sang and pocketed microphones. His party trick came during mike setups. While talking to engineer John Rollo, he would randomly mouth silent words. The engineer would spend much energy and effort trying to find the cause of these unpredictable dropouts. After about half an hour, I went into the studio to discover that there was no dropping-out at all, of course. My, how we all laughed, slapping each other heartily on the back and praising Gary's creative sense of humour. His then-wife turned up and they had a blazing row about drugs. When I returned the next day, John Rollo asked me whether I had taken a particularly expensive Neumann mike home. 'No, not at all', I told him. "'Could it have been Gary?', he enquired. I called Gary and he denied it flatly. A few years later, he confessed that it had been him, and that he had sold it in a Ladbroke Grove pub a few days later.

We recorded with guitarist Angie in Chas Chandler's Red Bus studio in Portland Place, London, coincidentally right next door to my favourite pub. One of these tunes would

become the b-side to our single, 'I'm Not In Love With You', which told the tale of Chris and my exploits around London's club, in a manner reminiscent of the Rolling Stones, with whom I had briefly jammed in Paris.

Mercury Records snapped up 'Pop Sensibility', and released it in an unintelligible picture sleeve. I endeared myself to the art department by pointing out that it was completely unreadable and thus an almost complete waste of effort. It was too late to change it, however. When newspaper ads for the single appeared (pics of such tyrants and despots as Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong with the byline 'but they never had Pop Sensibility'), I got my revenge by insisting that the copy included '.... complete with unintelligible picture sleeve'. But it wasn't an auspicious beginning to a relationship with the record company.

UK radio roundly ignored the single release, but not so children's TV. Mercury Records got us onto 'Get It Together', where we were presented by a duck and a pederast. It didn't further our career noticeably, except for an increasing number of farmers who turned up at gigs. With new guitarist Tommy, we made some more demos, and then still more.

We played a number of London gigs but Mercury declined to pursue the relationship further. I once saw an accounting for the single which appeared to show that we had sold a negative number of records. There was one more record returned than bought, a possibly unique state of affairs. Following a gig at the Marquee, Chris's one-time manager Jazz Summers turned up. Backstage, he told us that Chris was still signed to him and he (Jazz Summers) was forbidding him (Chris) to do any more work with him (me). It was rather confusing but I knew what he meant, as he (Jazz) had done this once before, with his protégé Jamie Crompton, resulting in the Jamie's disappearance midway through a Radio Stars tour. (This was also the reason that Jamie, the fourth member of Radio Stars, wore a rubber Mickey Mouse head on the cover of the Radio Stars' Holiday Album'. But I digress...).

I offered my dissenting opinion, whereupon Jazz suggested that we fight each other there and then, for the services of Chris. I considered his offer, not being a violent person by nature. After some moments, I said "OK" and stood up, preparing to do battle. "No, it's alright, it doesn't matter..." said Jazz, and went off to become enormously rich by co-managing George Michael and setting up Big Life Records.

Chris's former band the Autographs were signed to Mickie Most's RAK Records, and Mickie heard some of our demos. He thought that one tune showed promise and booked us in to record a single. He would poke his head round the door to hear how we were doing, then disappear back up to his penthouse office. Mid-afternoon, the phone rang. 'OK, Mickie, no problem', said Greg the engineer. He turned to us and said, "The session's finished, get out!". So we did, it seemed only polite. (The song that we were recording, then called 'Habibya', was later reworked as 'Why Do I...' on the Baboon in the Basement'. As were the previously mentioned 'Greenfinger' and 'Hit Him On The Head With A Hammer').

Money was beginning to be a problem and various members, quite rightly, took whatever offers were made to them. Chris and I ceased operating as the Blue Meanies. We took up semi-permanent residence in a demo studio and wrote and recorded songs for the next two years, time permitting. It was about this time that I received call from the incomparably unpleasant DJ Jeremy Healy, with whom I was fated to work for the next two or three years, which brought me up to scratch technologically and earned me quite a bit of money to boot, but at a price.

The Blue Meanies was the last 'band' effort that I would make; I followed the DJ/techno star for a good few years before falling (or perhaps toppling would be a better expression) into so-called 'world music' and then moving to Germany before finally meeting my amanuensis Pelle Almgren, who provided sufficient inspiration for me to begin making records again. And that's what I'm still doing.

Martin Gordon 2006

Available from [iTunes](#) (direct link) and most other e-tailers

Track list:

1. Pop Sensibility (*feat. Gary Holton*)
2. I'm Not In Love With You
3. I Got the Buzz
4. Eastern Girls Western Girls
5. Greenfinger
6. Brontosaurus (*Roy Wood*)
7. Hit Him On the Head - *later re-recorded for The Baboon in the Basement*
8. Mania Express
9. Habibya – *later re-worked as Why Do I for The Baboon in the Basement*
10. Everything Will Fade Away
11. Mad About the Girl
12. Too Late (*Gordon/Gent*)
13. Thinking of You (*Gordon/Gent*)
14. I Don't Know You (*Gordon/Gent*)
15. Love Won't Leave Me Alone
16. Let's Make Money
17. Somewhere There's a Place for Us – *later recorded by Radio Stars on 'Somewhere There's a Place For Us' compilation*
18. Golden Girl
19. Good Girls Gone Bad
20. The Boat Just Sank
21. Emotions In Motion (*Gordon/Gent*)
22. Our Love (What Happened To)