

The Molesters August-October 1979 by Paul Martin

Towards the end of our time in Siren, both Charlie McLenehan and I had wanted to find a more developed vehicle as our musical outlet. We went to visit Paul Hayward, the Molesters guitarist at his famous Sillwood Terrace band house (he owned or leased a large building that he sub-let rooms to musicians), having advertised for musicians to reform the Molesters who had just split up in their classic Small Wonder singles line up. The idea was that Charlie and I would become the new rhythm section along with Wayne Calcott, the former line up's drummer.. In the end, Paul decided he wanted to remain the sole guitarist, but asked if I wanted to be the bassist in the new line up. I took this on and Charlie formed The Relatives with Mark Gresty, formally of the Molesters! Paul Hayward also recruited former Wrist Action lead vocalist, Tom Maltby to be the new Molesters lead vocalist.

We spent some time rehearsing both old Molesters songs and some new ones that Paul Hayward had written during August. The idea was always to play out and about as much as possible. The classic Molesters line up had played plenty in Brighton, but aimed quite fairly at getting support slots in London (I remember seeing them play on the same bill as Crass in fact at the Lyceum I think). They had a reputation of not really being part of the Brighton band scene because of this and because they had managed to put out two good 45s on the east London based Small Wonder label which rather set them apart in some people's perceptions. So it was as a means of reinvention that this new line up of the Molesters set out, this time minus the two girl singers that had been one of their main attractions.

The first thing Paul wanted to do was arrange as many gigs as possible in a kind of mini-tour of the country, with a couple of initial warm up gigs locally. Our first gig together was in the evening of Punky Pete's punk wedding at the Resources Centre. We had been in the countryside all day gathering and consuming magic mushrooms (they taste pretty foul actually in the raw). And as we got to the Resources Centre, the chemical effect kicked in. Certainly it was a weird experience looking at the aftermath of a wedding reception that included the local punk who's who (I remember Helen McCookery book distinctly), when we had not been part of that with these magic mushrooms inside of us, talk about being on the outside looking in, weird indeed! We did a fair gig though and went down well that night. I do remember Patrick Fitzgerald asking me why I was wearing a Sid Vicious T Shirt and saying something to the effect of 'he was no hero'. I simply said it was made locally and I was supporting a local enterprise.

Arranging the 'tour' entailed sitting by the telephone with a copy of the Melody Maker ringing up hotels, pubs and clubs to see if we could get a spot. Paul did most of this, though I rang one or two and we ended up with a five date 'tour' reaching from Accrington in South Lancs up to Newcastle on Tyne. We recruited Simon Watson, who had been a roadie for The Plastix, (and later became manager of Midnight and The Lemon Boys) to drive us and our gear in a rented van and also act as a roadie. This jolly jape lasted a week, though of course, in terms of memory it seems to have been a lot longer. It was a good laugh. We lived on mars bars and motorway services food (I actually lost weight in a week on a diet of mars bars, egg and chips etc!). I do recall arriving at a farm house where we were being put up overnight in a place called Barnaldswick, before we played the two gigs in neighbouring Colne.

Both Simon and I were allotted the attic to kip down in our sleeping bags. Apparently the UK Subs had been staying there a few days before and the place was littered with girls knickers and stockings etc!! Simon and I played Submarine commanders as we attempted to navigate the angular roofing structure right above our heads as we got into our sleeping bags; "Going down now No.1, I might be some time", "roger that No.2" came the reply in the dark.

The night we arrived there, we were all starving hungry but of course no shops were open and it was in the middle of nowhere. There were I think maybe two or three very small potatoes that we found and spent an hour or so waiting for them to bake in an oven so we could get half a mouthful each. I still remember descending on a local cafe the next morning with everyone piling out of the van and ordering huge fry up breakfasts of egg and chips and

tea etc. and the young waitresses laughing at our southern / London like accents; "you're not from round here then?" they said and of course we had a great laugh with them. Difficult to imagine that being a point of conversation any more seeing how much the world has shrunk these days.

At the Union Hotel, I think all of us were allocated one room and a double bed so most of us were on the floor for the night. At Newcastle Balambras, we were informed it was almost the only place for local bands to play hence the three support bands. (on a revolving stage!). They were hard to please up there, as northern crowds are reputed to always be, but we enjoyed it well enough. We met quite a few people along the way and some very nice girls in particular in Colne! On our return we did two local gigs, one at the Buccaneer (where the only photos of us were taken) and another at the Resources Centre again. Thereafter, we split.

I think Paul perhaps thought Tommy and I were not as serious as he was organisationally. I left and Paul brought in a French guy called Francois on bass, who was renting one of his rooms in the band house. They played one remaining gig commitment in Salisbury I think. Then they had a gig at the Buccaneer which I went along to see. Tommy did the sound check, but John Ellis, the former lead singer in the Molesters, was also in the crowd and called from the floor something like, "what's happening with this gig Paul, am I doing it or not?". He did do the gig and Tommy got off with Stella, one of the previous girl singers from the Molesters and danced to the music with her rather than singing it that night!

In any event I think that was pretty much it. They had altered some of the songs so there was more syncopation to them which I didn't like much, but I thought it was an interesting change at least. I don't think they lasted long after that though. I would shortly afterwards reunite with Charlie as the Relatives came to an end and form Life Size Models.

--