

THE RED SQUARES

- ON TOP OF THE POPS?!!

Red Squares interview with Naked Eye, a Brighton fanzine 1980

(Credit and thanks to John Pender)

The Red Squares are relatively new to the Brighton scene. Since their appearance on Vaultage 80 they've started to play live and have appeared fairly regularly on the Radio Brighton Tuesday Programme, a show which devotes half an hour solely to local bands and their music ('We wouldn't have done anything had it not been for that radio show'). They play a breed of pop music ranking in quality with groups such as The Undertones, Young Marble Giants and OMD (honestly) - they're 'great.'

Red Squares music captivates. A poppy synth and sometimes funk-tinged rhythm guitar are backed up by repeated bursts from the bass and a drum machine to provide a tremendous background to the oft amusing lyrics. Vocals and synth playing are shared between Diana and Simon. Rhythm guitar is played by John and bass by Chris.

I talked to John and Simon the night they had three songs played on the Tuesday Programme', shortly before their busiest yet period of six gigs in two weeks. John and Simon were originally with a guy called Russell, who sung and wrote some of the material, as Bleep and Booster. Some of this early material is still included in the set, although it started to be phased out. After Russell left, Simon took over on vocals and Chris joined the group as bassist. Diana joined the group soon after, about the same time as the drum machine was bought. Chris' determination to play live is what rushed the band onto the live circuit. Their only track on record so far is The Russians Are Coming on the Vaultage compilation LP Vaultage 80.

SIMON: We were rather surprised at the interest Attrix had in us. The first time they heard us was before the Vaultage album. We'd never played live or anything and they said "We want this track for the album" and we were really surprised. We did the Russians Are Coming very, very hastily in one afternoon.

JOHN: It was very badly mixed.

SIMON: It's something we're quite conscious of really - recording quality.

All four members of the band have a hand in writing the music, but not the

lyrcs.

SIMON: Diana or I come up with the words. It never really works to a formula, I mean we don't write the music first and then the lyrics, or the other way round, it just depends how it goes really. I mean like Sinking Feeling, it was on Southern TV News, about this woman scuba diver who went after buried treasure and in doing so she got tangled up with a 400 year old skeleton that dragged her down under the water and she proceeded to asphixiate in her own vomit in her mask. It was a horrible story but the way they reported it was so unbelievably flippant - it was just next to the weather!

I suggested a similarity between The Red Squares and The Chefs.

JOHN: I can see the similarity in the sound.

SIMON: And in the songs a bit. I think it's a Brighton sound. It's a bit sort of superficial in the titles and a bit twee in a way. It's certainly nothing hard end serious - that's the thing about Brighton music. It's very flippant, especially the bands that have made it, Birds With Ears and The Piranhas are perfect examples but I don't think any Brighton bands have really *influenced us.*

If you got chance, would you turn professional?

JOHN: It would take the fun out of it.

SIMON: No, I don't think I would.

JOHN: We're not that committed to being rock musicians or whatever.

How far would you actually go?

SIMON: Even at the moment the band starts to be a, bit of a drug because you start to feel you can't do without it. But if we ever got anywhere good, I mean I'd like to get on Top Of The Pops because that's the epitomy of pop, it's actually transient pop - it's there one week and people see it and then after that I'd sort of feel - that's it really. But then it's difficult because I said that after the track on the album. When we formed our sole intention was to get a record out. We were going to bring out a single on our own and that was it - then we'd made a point. Then when we got on Vaultage I sort of felt like saying well let's give it up now, we've done what we wanted. But then somebody takes an interest in you and you still enjoy doing it, so it's difficult to give it up. So how far we go I don't really know.

JOHN: Now we've got other people committed to us - our manager

SIMON: Diana spent £200 on equipment - you start to feel people are relying on you. All of us are really involved in our other work which is the most important thing, so it depends how well the band goes, it really does.

Have you got any plans to record?

SIMON: They mentioned an album.

JOHN: That's quite along term thing. Immediately we want to do a single.

SIMON: But even if we did that I don't know if it would sell or anything, but I don't know if that's important. The point is you've done it. That's what it's all about.

Have you found you've ended up making a loss at gigs?

SIMON: We lost money at the first gig (Seaford) and we didn't get paid at one, so we lost on transport, but I don't think that's very important. The money is not important.

JOHN: Really we just want to enjoy ourselves.

SIMON: At the moment it's good. I mean, we know we've got six gigs to do and it's a bit important and hearing us on the radio and everything, it's quite good so we just enjoy it.

Upcoming gigs for The Red Squares:

Thurs 18 June 1980: at the Concorde with Voluntary Sector

Sat 20 June 1980: at the Basement with Red Beat (benefit gig for CND)

Sun 5 July 1980: at Jenkinson's with The Piranhas, Golinski Brothers