

EXCLUSIVE

Almost forty years later - now it can be heard!

In early September 2013 Phil 'punkdaddy' Byford received an email from one John Gosling. John explained that he had in his possession a white-label seven-inch vinyl single featuring a **Piranhas** song that he was convinced had never been officially released. According to Mr. Gosling, Bob Grover gave him the record decades ago and it's been lurking in the shadows somewhere in his home ever since - until now. The email to Phil had an mp3 attachment:

And yes, it was the mystery track.

punkbrighton can now - exclusively - reveal that the track in question is '**Shut Up,**' a very early Piranhas stage favourite.

However there was a problem: the single was in terrible condition, with deep scratches and hundreds of lesser marks and audio debris scattered throughout its four minutes, making it sound as if someone was frying an enormous pan of eggs, bacon, bangers and black-pudding with a transistor radio on somewhere in the background. Phil shot off an email to me, explaining this major discovery and sending me the track to listen to. I asked him if he would like me to work on it and perhaps try to clean it up as best I could, which he duly agreed to.

Stuart's Jeff Lynne Weekend

Using Adobe's fantastic **Audition** software, two days of painstaking labour followed: eyes screwed up in concentration on the screen of my computer monitor. The first task was to clear those bloody awful massive scratches.

I did this by zooming in to the aggrieved moments, selecting them - by carefully dragging the cursor over them - and hitting the 'delete' button on my keyboard. Sounds simple? Well, maybe it does, but it isn't. Sometimes what looks like a scratch is actually Dick Slexia slamming his snare drum, or Grover screaming at the very top of his vocal range...so a great deal of caution was called for.

Once the biggest and worst of these scratches were removed, I then went through the track again and again, getting rid of smaller but nonetheless vile-sounding scratches, pops, clicks and other lamentable audio shit.

This was a bit of a gamble - if I made an error there was the chance that it would make that section of the track sound even worse, in an odd way that's difficult to describe. This is why it took a couple of days.

After the minor blips and blaps were removed I began working on the intro, where a guitar chugs out an economical, brooding guitar riff. Unfortunately, this was the worst part of the mp3 in terms of surface noise.

The solution, after much head-scratching, cups of coffee and cold water splashing in the face, was to take one bar of the riff - the best I could find, scratch-wise - and make a loop of it. I meticulously cleaned up the loop section, a tedious but important chore. This done, I then deleted the entire introductory riff - which sounded fucking AWFUL on the original mp3 - and replaced it with the loop, now doubled up three times to replicate the intro-motif.

Next up: an attempt to bring down moments of high excitement, when Bob Grover yells out the title of the song...this was because his voice was distorting horribly, overloading the level on his microphone. It sounds to me as if this was recorded in a rehearsal room somewhere, using a crude two-track machine - probably a TEAC - with one microphone for the lead vocal and another as an ambient tool, maybe hung from the ceiling over the drum kit.

There may even have been just the one microphone which picked up the other instruments as a 'bleed-through,' but this is unlikely. I set up an EQ on the graphic equaliser settings for these ear-shattering moments and listened to Bob bawling his head off on a perpetual loop, manipulating the various slider-controls until I found a setting which softened and reduced the distortion as much as possible.

Finally - towards the end of day two - it was time to remaster the track. Levelling any imbalance between the left and right outputs was a simple issue but increasing overall amplification and adding subtle, new EQ (how much bass, treble and/or mid) were not. However, after some deliberation and experiments, I got a healthy volume level, reduced the overloaded bass and put some sparkling, crisp 'top' onto the track.

I'm proud of the end result. There are still some clear scratches on the recording: I'm afraid these could not be removed, as essential moments of music were happening behind them and these could obviously not, at any cost, be sacrificed.

Details Largely Missing

So, what is this amazing Piranhas gem? Where was it taped? Why on earth does it come to us on a seven-inch record? I put these questions to John Helmer and Bob Grover. John got back to me:

Hi Stuart

Neither Bob nor I can remember that much about it. Bob recalls that we might have had it mastered for a single, but the white labels weren't up to scratch so we didn't release it.

As to what year I couldn't say, but very early - probably 77-78.

Given that date, the drummer is probably Dick, but equally could be one of two others. Having listened to the sound file we both really like it and have no objections to it being put on the punk site. This is Piranhas pre-history: pre-Attrix and even pre-having-a-saxophone-player.

Neither Bob or I have any other old cassettes, white labels or anything else of this track, so what you have is the only copy, so far as we know.

A Quick Review

And the track?

Here's a white-hot treasure, a pounding, malevolent razor-cut delivered with awesome confidence. Over a marauding rhythm section and some outstanding lead guitar, Bob bellows his annoyance about someone he's really had enough of, some twat who loves the sound of his own voice too much.

Grover's vocal sounds at times uncannily like that of John Lydon and - even more so

- the bloke in Wire. This is a document of considerable historical importance as regards the Brighton music scene of the time, not to mention a valuable and fascinating addition to the general UK punk movement in 1977 - 1978.

Now all we need is for BBC6 Music to repeat the group's 15th September 1980 Mike Read session, with its two unreleased songs, '**Pay Back**' and '**Two-Time Sally.**' Unless of course someone reading this has a tape of it...if so, what are you waiting for?

Email us!

- **Stuart Jones,**
September 2013