

● Boo hoo! It's tears 'n' beer time for awkward Scousers **THE BOO RADLEYS**, who can't believe they're not famous yet and won't even laugh when **SIMON WILLIAMS** dubs them **The MBV Creation Can Afford**. Maybe they'll cheer up when they go on tour with stubborn soulmates **PALE SAINTS**, who used to be friends with reality, but now it's all brass bands and lamb placentas for them, reveals **JOHN MULVEY**. So what do they have in common? Two of this year's toppermost LPs, that's what. Eight-legged tour machine. **PETER WALSH**

SATURDAY AFTERNOON and Liverpool is in top form. Outside, drizzle permeates the atmosphere like sulphuric acid on naked flesh, pestering a city so miserable one wouldn't be surprised if the whole metropolis decided to hang itself from the nearest cathedral spire.

Inside The Pub Down The Road, the inclement weather is mirrored by the moist sound of sorrowful tears slowing dripping into half empty pint glasses. Plop. Plop. Plop. The Boo Radleys are not in top form.

Guitarist Martin Carr sits scratching his stubble like a man 500 years his senior. Bassist Tim Brown stares at the beer swillings on the table top. Drummer Bob Ciekia is currently re-defining the term 'The Quiet One'. They've muttered strange things about the consumption of whisky and French beer the night before. They're muttering very little right now. Singer Sice stares into his Diet Coke as though it's the very last thing he wants. The way events are going he won't have any choice in the matter.

Plop. Plop. Plop.
Hey! C'mon, it's not that bad! After all, aren't you the My Bloody Valentine That Creation Can Afford?

"Oh yes, very funny," grimaces Martin. "Very, very funny. Well done."
Plop.

AS EMO Phillips once said to the man with the horse's head, why the long face? The Boo Hoo Radleys have their reasons. They've probably borrowed a load from other people as well, just to add to the effect, but start with hangovers and work your way up and you might grasp just how glum, lackadaisical and... hungover they are.

"I don't know what happened to us," shrugs an almost anxious-looking Martin. "We were there... and then everybody else just went dead famous. And we never, yet we were releasing all these brilliant records. Except we weren't, because of all the Rough Trade problems."

Bingo! Pass 'Go' and collect several cheques which will bounce like a space-hopper on the moon. In one grumbled sentence the guitarist nails several traumas on the head. The Boo Radleys are down because—in spite of a series of gruesomely great EPs

TWO FOR THE PRICE OF WAN



The combined might of the Pale Boo Radley Saints (clockwise from top left) Ian, Chris, Meriel, Tim, Martin, Bob, Graeme and Sice

('Kaleidoscope', 'Boo Up!', 'Adrenaline') over the past couple of years—they are not perceived by the nuclear family to be the dog's bollocks.

They've seen every Tom, Dick and Tarquin sweep past them in 1991 while they had to sit on their skint arses back home in Liverpool as Rough Trade tripped over a series of financial disasters. They've been affiliated to every 'scene' invented during their career, without being allowed to create a scene of their own. They've watched the new wave (sic) of guitar gangsters f— the Flab 40 rigid while they've been stuck to the floppy peripheries.

And now it's time for some justice to be done. The Boo Radleys have finally got round to releasing their 'proper' debut album, ironically titled

'Everything's Alright Forever', and the Liverpool four are out to screw the judicial system: "I wish the LP had come out when the Chapterhouse and Slowdive albums came out," glowers Sice. "Then we could have really shown them up."
Plop.

"IT'S DIFFICULT to get a handle on us," announces the singer, and he's not wrong there. "You can imagine how annoying it is when within the space of a few months you get compared to shoe-gazers, Dinosaur Jr rock animals and Liverpool pop bands. You think, does anyone know what the f— we're on about? Have these people heard us, even?"

If they haven't, 'Everything's Alright...' offers the ideal

opportunity to taste the Boos' brew of gasping melodies and brain-scrambling sonic booms. From flamenco fiddlings to barrages of belligerence, from paddling in pop to surfing the screech, The Boo Radleys have managed to make a record which, by turns, is astonishing, ambiguous, ambitious and, above all, awkward.

The classic example of their obstinacy is the quite splendid 'Memory Babe', which closes with an insane landslide of guitars, before which there's a deliciously tragic melody amputated in its prime. It's a recurring theme: the Boos invent a classic hookline and then kill it off where their contemporaries would cling to it for dear commercial life. Bastards!

"That's boring, innit?" explains Martin. Sort of. "You've said it and

done it, so that bit's finished. I mean, we play the songs and we mean to add on another verse or chorus, but we can't be bothered."

"A lot of bands most of the time would only write a third of a song," points out Sice. "They write a good bit and repeat it three times and it goes on for so long that you wanted it to finish a minute and a half ago, which is pointless, really. If you can make the song better by doing other stuff then you should."

This very awkwardness, natch, is precisely why the world should listen to the Boos.

"People never know what to expect, because everything's different," nods Sice. "That's what we like about other bands, that

LAMB PLACENTAS, stuffed elephants, backwards versions of 'My Way', cover versions by brass bands... Once in a while, a grain of truth sneaks through the Pale Saints' protective curtain of subterfuge and bare-faced fibbing.

But does anyone notice? Even then, the Leeds held-back four still give the impression they're spinning lies to baffle the hell out of an already baffled, helplessly fascinated audience. A couple of hours with them is time spent in a three-dimensional—and very low-key—Oliver Stone movie; the line between fact and fiction disappeared long ago.

"I don't know whether people want to hear the truth," says Ian, justifying his right to spout nonsense 90 per cent of the time. "Their expectations are so high that giving them real information is letting them down. They're expecting to find out that, uh... all four of us lie in our cellars for three months of the year and don't do anything, hooked up to machines and being fed lamb placentas."

"But when we really do something that's a bit unexpected, people immediately think we're lying. A friend of mine thought I was winding her up telling her about the recording we did yesterday, when we got a brass band to play a couple of our songs."

How odd.

IN REALITY (always a tricky concept with Ian), he's just made one of his rare excursions into the realms of non-fiction. The Tintwhistle Brass Band's lush, gorgeous treatments of 'A Thousand Stars Burst Open' and 'A Revelation' not only exist but have been rapidly pressed up as a seven-inch, to give away with initial vinyl copies of the second Pale Saints album, another successful stage in the band's campaign of bloody-minded unorthodoxy.

'In Ribbons', for the most part, is like nothing else on Earth. It renders all the fusty, Usual-Indie-Noise-Suspects comparisons that have been foisted on the band in the past look more laughable than ever. Complex, involving, frequently moving, there are moments which make Slowdive sound like The Ramones, and The Ramones sound like Slowdive, often in the same song. You'll love it, but you won't be able to understand it.

"People don't need to see the instruction booklet to appreciate the article," explains Ian Masters unhelpfully. "They don't need to know why they like the record. I'd rather they appreciated the music, not any particular noble idea behind it."

Only Governor Bill Clinton wriggles away from the real facts more regularly. But surely they'll admit that their music can be difficult and wilfully perverse? Won't the least straightforward band in Britain own up to that?

"I don't really know how we can look at ourselves objectively," muses Ian, staring with monumentally sleepy eyes. "It's normal for us. You have to be distant from something to get that spark of excitement, or mystery, or emotion, or more mystery from it. The only conscious decision is to avoid some of the more unpleasant and boring conventions."

"Why not make it difficult, though?" Meriel Barham, guitarist and vocalist, makes a break for freedom from the

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BOO RADLEYS

sense of 'F—ing hell, what are they gonna do next?!'

And what bands do that for you?

"None really — that's why we do it!" decides Martin. "Our album should keep people occupied for hours, just listening to it like you can with 'The White Album': there's so much stuff on it you can't remember what's coming next. And if anybody else was doing that now we wouldn't have to bother."

"You've got to be your own favourite band, otherwise there's no point in doing it."

More beer is consumed. The world becomes a marginally more attractive place to be in. Martin announces that The Boo Radleys have become more eclectic in their tastes over the years, moving on from the Valentines to stuff like Definition Of Sound and hence leaving all the blinkered bands "with three records in their collection" behind.

This leads us into the realm of competition, and how the band's move to Creation's burgeoning roster inspires the Boos to greater things. Yet battling with the Bums and the Banana Snorkels down the Bull & Gate isn't Martin's idea of fun.

"That's just depressing, 'cos we'd like to compete with bigger people than that: we wanna compete with the Springsteens of the world. It's like the best indie music is The Close Lobsters and stuff, that is perfect indie music. Whereas we're totally the other end, we're the worst indie music possible because we're such major label corporate megastars it's untrue!"

"Yeah, it is untrue, isn't it?" mumbles a sorrowful Sice.

IN DESPERATE times like this, desperate measures are called for. Ask The Boo Radleys what actually makes them happy, what perversions send them spinning cartwheels amongst the blissed-out stratospheres of unadulterated pleasure, and Tim will shout "Pies!". Great.

"Service station stops on the motorway — they're really good!" beams a momentarily enthusiastic Sice. "You never get such a good rush as when you pull up at a service station — unless it's a Wimpy."

The next step on the ladder is a national jaunt with stubborn soulmates Pale Saints. This, to The Boo Radleys, is A Good Thing, because it means they can get out and about and, erm, out of it. Finally, those bleary boozed-up eyes glisten with a glimmer of pleasure and the Story Of The Boos turns over to a happier chapter. Hurrah!

"Bob went a bit mad once when we went to France," leers Martin, nudging the drummer out of his slumber. "He was almost made to walk the gangplank on the ferry for abusing all the passengers! He got warned twice... he was on a whisky binge."

Obviously. What were you saying to them, Bob?

"Don't tell him!" shouts Sice. "Don't tell him!"

"Oh, it's alright," he says wearily, "I can't remember what I said, anyway."

"He was really bad," says Martin with relish. "He was unconscious by the time we got to France, so we had to throw him in the back of the van. Then all of a sudden he woke up while we were at this service station and he must have thought he was still at home 'cos he walked in and everyone was talking French and he just started shouting, 'Everyone's gone weird! Everyone's gone f—ing weird!'"

Martin relates a disgusting story about Sice throwing up blood and bits of liver and walking around Oxford with a halo of sick around his head. Then there's another cheery anecdote about Sice vomiting in Bradford and the rest of the band 'giving him a good kicking' for being so ungrateful for their attempts to throw him in a sink.

"That's why this tour's gonna be really good," dreams Sice. "It's just gonna be a big release for us... we're gonna go f—ing mad!"

"I think Pale Saints are gonna get upset with us,"

grins Martin.

That's rife.



On the road rock 'n' roll madness ahoy. NOT!

PALE SAINTS

ranks of inscrutability. "Why make music in 4/4 time every time? You don't want a dot-to-dot song, do you? How boring!"

'In Ribbons' bears this out in dazzling, ambitious style. Everything is a mood-swinging mixture of sweetness and blight, as off-kilter rhythms tussle with inescapable hooks and Graeme Naysmith's fiery guitar fuses with sleek cello passages to create a new — and probably short-lived — genre, Baroque Grunge. Only 'Neverending Night' has any blatant precedent, its dazed, yearning solo recalling, bizarrely, Fleetwood Mac's drab-rock classic, 'Albatross'.

"Listen to it again and see if you can hear 'My Way' going on in there as well. Backwards."

Why do you lie so much, Ian?

"I don't know why I bother. I don't even do it convincingly, do I? It's just idle pleasure, a cost-effective hobby. There's some pleasure in doing it so badly, in lying about something there's no point in lying about."

"I've been waiting six years to ask him that," grins Graeme.

Drummer Chris Cooper: "They are a very secretive band, this lot. I'm prepared to reveal humiliating facts about myself, but I never get anything back. I tell them embarrassing, ridiculous things that've happened to me; near-fights I've got into, trivial things. It's my desire to get it off my chest, but nobody else gets things off their chests."

"When you reveal yourself to friends, after a while you want something back in trust, you expect them to open up a bit," says Meriel, reverting to the protective party line. "You feel cheated at the end of interviews like this, because you're

not going to get any intimacies from the people who're reading it."

"If my mum and dad know I've been lying, I'll be out of my inheritance," says Ian. "I've got a stuffed elephant coming to me sooner or later."

Bollocks.

IN A perfect world, the Pale Saints would be utterly anonymous, dispatching the occasional record from cellars well stocked with lamb placentas, never having to speak or appear, let alone hide behind their smokescreen of lies. In this imperfect, recession-beaten world, The Residents alone can get away with such total art-wankery. And the Pale Saints are not only forced to endure the interviewing ordeal, but actually have to tour as well, this time round economy-packed with management-sharing Scousers The Boo Radleys. It's a tough life, and Ian — surprise — doesn't seem to relish it very much.

"There's a huge gap in my life every time we go on tour. Mental illnesses tend to develop, when you find you're having a lot of trouble controlling your brain, and consequently your actions."

The vision of Ian — who's raised lugubriousness to an art-form — careering about a hotel, slinging television sets left, right and centre, is more than a little implausible. He didn't mean that kind of madness, of course.

"I just turn into a vegetable on tour. My concentration, which isn't very good to start with, is reduced to zero level. I take about 400 books away with me and I'll be lucky if I get through one."

"He's completely scatty on tour," Chris concurs. "When we're on stage we have to keep prodding him, 'cos he doesn't know what he's doing. He goes around the stage, doing a bit of dusting."

"I'd like to do something outrageous, though," whispers Graeme, the only Pale Saint who remotely enjoys life on the road. "When you read about bands in the '60s, they all seemed to have a really good time."

"No-one's stopping you," says Ian magnanimously. "No-one in this band is forbidden to do stupid things. If you want to take all your clothes off and crawl along a hotel corridor waving your head off, that's up to you."

"I smash a lot of things up," reveals Chris. It's a bit late for him to pretend to be Keith Moon reincarnated. "They're all in our cellar. When I lose my temper I go down there with an axe and chop up all the landlady's furniture. I should do it in hotel rooms, I suppose." He doesn't seem convinced. Neither does Meriel.

"There's nothing worse than being contrived. I get the feeling that Primal Scream on the road is the biggest pile of contrived shite out. But it seems to appeal to people the way Bobby Gillespie behaves..."

"It doesn't appeal to me," says Chris, brewing up for a rant. "Bobby Gillespie's just a sexless little twig. He looks like a product of incest, a farmer's son with a strange little face. It's weird that all these girls really find him sexy. I quite like some of Primal Scream's music... but he is an ugly f—er."

Finally, something's really got under the Pale Saints' skins, something which can help define their elusive trickery. Primal Scream, like them or not, are flash, showy, blatant, immediate, in thrall to rock's glittering past. And the Pale Saints? Well, to put it as succinctly as they would... they aren't.

And that's the truth.