

# NEWSLETTER No.3

FEBRUARY 2012

The official newsletter for the updated biography, due for release in autumn 2012, *DESIRE: Paddy McAloon's Prefab Sprout*. Includes background notes from the book's research, extracts from interviews and related stories, quotes and grapevine... contributions are welcome... what is it *you* wish to see in the book?

## In this issue:

- ☆ Early Fanzines that featured the Prefab Sprout
- ☆ Kitchenware VIZ article from 1984
- ☆ Paul Ludford – interview extract
- ☆ The Prefab Sprout Project – it's off and running!
- ☆ The final part of Tim's look at legendary, unavailable recordings
- ☆ Wendy Smith plays the Northumbrian pipes – fact or fiction?

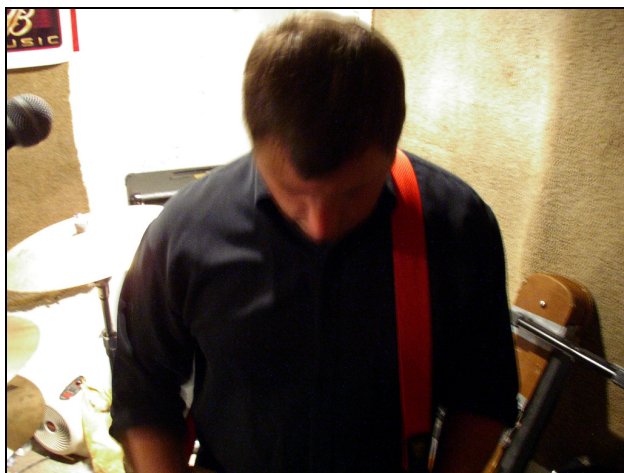
*"The Prefab Sprout Project" launched*

**Update:** Unfortunately, due to pressures of other projects, work commitments and health issues, the suggested Tribute Gig to coincide with the book launch will not be going ahead. It is intended to host a book launch, however. We can informally announce that Valley Press UK will be the publisher for the book. This may ring a few bells with some of you. It's run by Sproutnet host Jamie McGarry. The cover for the book has been painted by New York musician and artist Rich Rickaby. More news as things unfold.

~o~

## The Prefab Sprout Project

<http://www.theprefabsproutproject.com>



The camera-shy Scott McPherson, Project Chief



The lovely Andrea Perry singing the parts of 'Wendy'

### What is The Prefab Sprout Project?

Well, it's a global fan collective, coming together to write and record a minimum of 12 original songs that embody the sound of Prefab Sprout. It's a celebratory record written by fans and for fans of this wonderful musical group. The final product will be more than a tribute album; every song will be original from the ground up, though purely influenced by the sound and style of song writer Paddy McAloon and his great band – Prefab Sprout.

### Can anyone contribute ideas to this project?

Yes, that is the entire point of this project ...and the best part! We encourage any and all fans of Prefab Sprout to submit ideas, lyrics, music or even cover art.

Every idea submitted will be carefully reviewed by our Creative Director, who will compile the best ideas for our root house-band to bring to life, record, sing and finally mix for this "homage" CD. Of course, not every idea can make it onto the project, but we will make sure that the best ideas are realized and added to it. We are shooting for excellence. We want to create an album of songs that will try to rival Prefab Sprout and hopefully make them proud to have such awesome fans!

### **I'm not a musician, can I contribute?**

If we think you have something ideal for the project we will pair your lyrics with music that was either submitted by another fan or we will write music for it ourselves. And that goes for music submitted without lyrics – same process.

### **What era of Prefab Sprout are you aiming at?**

Well, we had decided early on that perhaps we would focus on just "The Dolby Years," but then we realized it would be a shame to count out the very quirky and complex early recordings, so it's a wide-open playing field, so to speak, and any "era" of the band you would like to write for is game. However, if you are a musician and you write a melody from the "Swoon" era, please be kind and send along tablature as well.

### **I play an instrument; can I contribute to the recording process?**

Yes, we have a root house-band to do the framework, but if you play an instrument that lends well to a song and you have the appropriate recording gear, i.e. Pro Tools, Reaper, Sony Vegas, Cubase, Cakewalk Sonar or any of the major DAW software, and not to mention a quality microphone -then you are good to go with us! Just shoot us an email and we will sort out the details. Recording Specs: 24 bit/48K.

### **Who is recording and singing the songs for this project?**

The songs will all be recorded by Scott McPherson in his home studio. He will also be singing all material chosen, and I'm told in his best "Paddy" style vocal. And lending her "Wendy Smith" like vocal will be the extremely talented Andrea Perry. Check out the bio's and audio clips on the webpage at [www.theprefabsproutproject.com](http://www.theprefabsproutproject.com) Also check out the hot first demo, 39 Steps at the website.

Please support this project, which Scott and I are intending to coordinate with the publishing of the book in autumn of this year. That's the ambitious target, anyway. More Sprout food for you hungry readers... but let's keep hoping that Paddy pulls another gem of an album out of the bag again soon.

## **I ask you, is Wendy pulling your leg?**

Tim Linnell spotted a couple of interesting references made by Wendy Smith on twitter in January 2012, with pictures of harmoniums posted. A possible recording project maybe? Or a wind-up? Let's not forget that she played along with the misleading Trapdoor Melancholy album 'story'!

Here are the tweets:

- "It's like a kind of pedalled Northumbrian pipe. Strange, beguiling sound, curlew like. Reedy. Haunted. Notes falling away out of tune."
- "Listened to recordings made today - imperfect but harmonium wheezingly lovely. Legs are aching. Semi-tone difference in tuning to piano."

### **What do you think? Well, take a look at these White Rabbits / Red Herrings and make your own mind up:**

On the 24th February 2009, The BBC website reports that Stigers has begun work on a side project developing a new Clarinet in collaboration with the Hetton-le-Hole Musical Historical Society. The new Clarinet based upon the 1923 "Hetton-Thunderstorm" will be "Triple Bassed" and reverberate lower than any other modern Clarinets.

On the 17th of July 2009, whilst on BBC Breakfast News, Curtis Stigers confirmed that reports of him developing a new Clarinet are untrue. Mentioning that the claim is on Wikipedia and adding that he has no intention of developing a new Clarinet and only ever played the Clarinet for a short time at school.

— Ned Trifle II, Saturday, 1 August 2009

### **Wiki entry**

On the 13th February 2011, North East Radio reported that Olivia Newton-John and Curtis Stigers had invited McAloon to join the 'Hetton Thunderer' project. A collaboration between musicians and the Hetton-le-Hole Historical Musical Society to re-invent forgotten musical instruments. Paddy expressed his long term dream of developing a larger version of the 'Lituus' which he believes will be the lowest sounding of all currently used musical instruments.

On 12 February 2011, the BBC website reported that Newton-John was keen to join the 'Hetton Thunderer' project, collaboration between musicians and the Hetton-le-Hole Historical Musical Society to re-invent forgotten musical instruments. Newton-John wished to keep the project under-wraps until demonstrations of the remodelled musical instruments were made public.

# Kitchenware's Cash Mountain!

## -Label absolutely loaded with money

Bosses at Newcastle's Kitchenware record label are rolling in money after the success of their recent record releases.

### MILLION

"We didn't expect to do so well at first", label chief Kieth Armstrong told us. Although reluctant to discuss finances Armstrong does not deny claims that he is earning in excess of £70,000 per month from record sales alone. And label co-founder Paul Lumsden would neither confirm nor deny that at 25 he has already entered the millionaire bracket.

### WEALTH

"Obviously we're quite happy with the way things have been going", he admitted. But despite their reluctance to discuss cash, we found traces of enormous wealth at Kitchenware's Newcastle city centre offices.

### CASH

Ten and twenty pound notes littered the floor, and bundles of cash were piled high in every corner. The door to an adjacent rehearsal room was blocked from the inside - by what felt like large sacks of cash.



Counting money - a never ending job for Kitchenware Records

And the owner of a nearby boat shop told us how Armstrong and others had visited his shop three times in one afternoon - on each occasion paying for expensive yachts in cash. And workers in an office overlooking the Kitchenware headquarters spoke of twice daily deliveries of money to the offices by armoured security van.

### LOLLY

Of the bands on the label Prefab Sprout have so far generated the most interest. Their recent single 'Don't Cry' narrowly missed the Top Forty, however their debut LP 'Swoon' looks set to make a much bigger impact on Kitchenware's already bulging coffers. Highly rated by Radio One's top D.J. David Kidd-Jensen, the album looks set to go platinum.

### DOSH

New releases are also planned from The Kane Gang, The Daintees, Hurrah! and The Link Men.

Indeed, the future for bands in the North East hasn't looked so promising since the sixties when The Animals made regular visits to the Top Ten with unforgettable hits like 'Ferry Across The Mersey' and 'The Fog On The Tyne Is All Mine All Mine'.

# Strange Snag

Newcastle band 21 Strangers have hit a snag in their bid for hit parade super stardom. For none of the members of the band know who the others are.

### ODD

Bassist Derek told us: "Our particular brand of body music, which is based on reggae, soul and funk, with a smattering of African rhytm can be pretty akward to play when you don't know who the other musicians are".

### UNUSUAL

Said guitarist Dave: "Our manager, who I think might be Chas Chandler won't let any of us meet each other. I'm not even sure how many others there are".



Keith - probably the singer

But does this pose problems at gigs and rehearsals?

"We rehearse in separate rooms", said Kieth, who knows only that he is the singer. "At gigs I am blindfolded and lead onto the stage".

### PECULIAR

It's a miracle their last single 'On Safari' ever came about, let alone became such a hit in the North East charts.

### EXTRAORDINARY

Our investigations revealed that there are in fact only four members of the group, and Chas Chandler is in fact their manager. "I thought there were 21 of us!" said drummer Neil when we broke the news.

### QUEER

When questioned Chas revealed that the band had been playing gigs in and around London, and working in the studio. "Now that the band are no longer strangers, we should be hearing a lot more from them in the future", he quipped. (A fair bet I'd say - Ed.)

★ **FRANKIE • FEEL** ★  
HE'S ALWAYS FEELING PEOPLES' TITS!

I BET YOU SOP I CAN FEEL YOUR TITS WITHOUT TAKING MY HANDS OUT OF MY POCKETS!



WELL WORTH SOP I'LL SAY! CHORTLE!



# The Pleasure and Pain of Collecting

by Tim – Part Three

1990 turned out to be a significant year in my own relationship with Prefab Sprout, because despite having just about worn the grooves off all the albums up to and including “Protest Songs”, I somehow lost interest following a house move and period where my record collection was in storage and was not to return to the fold until 2009.

So it was that I missed my chance of seeing Prefab Sprout on the extensive Jordan tour of Europe – A US tour was mooted but cancelled because of the expense and risk of taking the full show. Having had quite a reasonable measure of success with “From Langley Park to Memphis”, Paddy was able to extend the band to include Paul Harvey on guitar, Karlos Edwards on percussion and vocals, and the incomparable Jess Bailey on keyboards.

The show itself was a much more accomplished affair than the hit and miss performances of previous tours and lasted a full two hours. Or so my friend Mike told me the day after the first gig, in Portsmouth, while enquiring why I hadn’t gone, also explaining that Paddy had looked nervous but had gradually got into the performance. The show had started, idiosyncratically, with “Michael” – not the most obvious opener - and ended with “Doo Wop in Harlem” with the band slowly leaving the stage while Paul Harvey played a glorious solo to a final fade. In between the band covered most of the well known favourites and even “the King of Rock ’N Roll” was included, joyously and playfully.

With the growing profile of the band and the rapidly reducing size of recording equipment, it would be reasonable to expect a plethora of recordings. But whether the bootleggers lost interest at the same time I did, or venue security increased, the tour doesn’t seem to have been at all widely recorded, with just a handful of tapes having surfaced.

A very hissy and slightly fast running – corrected on the more recent circulating copies - audience tape at least documents the opening date in Portsmouth, but is the only UK date for which a recording is confirmed. Onwards to Europe, and a very enthusiastic Spanish crowd are captured in a medium quality audience recording in Barcelona. The gig in Vooruit, Belgium was partially recorded in slightly better quality, and finally a decent recording of the gig in Copenhagen towards the end of the tour captures the band in an end of term sort of mood, with Paddy in top joke cracking form. The Copenhagen recording is the best of the bunch, but unfortunately suffers from tape problems towards the end.

And that’s your lot for that tour, unless someone knows different. The recordings reveal a somewhat disinterested Paddy – he was by this point completely on record as hating touring - and Wendy who had just done about her most wonderful recorded work on Jordan almost completely mixed out, with Karlos Edwards much more prominent as a vocalist even in her parts. Accomplished performances, yes, but they lack spark, and the session players add surface sheen without passion for the most part. But there are tremendous highlights: “Jordan: the Comeback” is wonderful, and “Moving the River” becomes a full band number building to a tremendous crescendo.

Other recordings probably exist however. A tape of the Glasgow Barrowlands concert has been reported but not confirmed. And somewhere behind a cupboard in a Anne Frank style hidden box room in a Dutch apartment in Rotterdam is the single most elusive Prefab Sprout concert recording in the world, of the Rotterdam concert. First reported by the taper, Edith, in the early 2000s on the Zorrophonic Prefab Sprout mailing list, this recording has survived several waves of attempts to get hold of it. At the last update, Edith’s fiancé had managed to move the cupboard, but the tape was not where it was expected to be and some real life issues prevented a proper search. It has become a traditional part of my own Eurovision song contest viewing to discuss this recording on Facebook chat with Edith, and I have high hopes it will eventually emerge. But not any time soon.

Apart from that, there are rumours that the tour was professionally recorded for a potential live album and that a DAT tape is doing the rounds somewhere. I’ve never had a sniff of them though.

Early in 1991 the touring band reformed briefly for an appearance on the BBC Late Show, which has survived in reasonable VHS versions which are on YouTube at time of writing. They played “Jordan: the Comeback” and “Doo Wop in Harlem”, quite beautifully.

And with a final performance in March 1991 at the Ricard Festival in Paris – not obviously recorded or filmed even though sponsored by a French TV Channel, M6 – it would have been understandable to assume that Prefab Sprout were finished as a live band, as their prominence waned and the time between albums increased. Paddy had made it clear he despised touring after all.

So it was to just about universal astonishment, that the band announced a tour of the UK and a date in Ireland, later increased to two, for early 2000. The story told was that Paddy had become so tired of having been tied to a computer sequencer during his work creating what was to become "I Trawl The Megahertz" that he'd decided just to go back to the "old thing with guitars". Martin joined him, with Neil Conti, and Jess Bailey on keyboards, but by this point Wendy had left the band once and for all, at least in part because she had had a child, but also probably because she didn't have much to do on stage and had started a new career as a music based educator.

By this time, Prefab Sprout had become a much beloved but cult band, and aficionados worldwide converged on the concerts, probably realizing that there would be few if any chances to see the band playing again. One particular fan, the legendary Stewart, managed to attend all but one of the UK concerts: happily for posterity, he went armed with a minidisc recorder so almost all of the concerts were recorded, albeit sometimes in variable quality.

Stewart was not at the two Dublin dates that closed the tour, but these were brilliantly recorded on DAT from the audience too, and so with the exception of the Warwick date, most of the Liverpool show with the exception of the encores, and the second half of the Cambridge show, everything is available.

Moreover, because of the wide availability of minidisc recorders and fairly relaxed security, there are multiple sources for some of the shows. Indeed if anyone has any old minidisks and cares to let me know, I'm collecting them together with the intention of creating "matrix" versions of the concert recordings. And of course I'm very keen to fill the holes in the record from Warwick, Liverpool and Cambridge.

And if the audience recordings were not enough, the BBC recorded the Cambridge concert and broadcast it on Radio 2 in an edited format. This was released on a silver disc bootleg CD – "Paddy the Comeback" and has been very widely circulated. It's a "must have" live recording, with Paddy in a very relaxed mood – as he was for much of the tour – and the cut down band sounding quite beautiful.

The tour was the first time the new, bearded and portly, Paddy was revealed to the general public, and given his extreme punctuality – the shows started on the dot of 8pm – many concertgoers were persuaded he was the support act as he shuffled on to stage. Following the opening number – "I Remember That" – much of the initial banter involved a succession of jokes about beards and because of the low key and relaxed nature of many of the concerts Paddy was able to swap banter with good humoured hecklers.

The best of the UK dates from a recording perspective is probably the Leeds Town & County recording, itself issued as a bootleg but not from Stewart's recording. Paddy was – unusually, because he's often shown an obsessive attachment to set ordering – persuaded to play Wichita Linesman by an audience member. It's a good audience recording in all senses, and a very good show. The other recordings are much of a muchness and of variable quality and probably you'll want one if you were there or for completeism but not for other reasons.

The definitive 2000 Tour recordings are the Dublin DATs though. Both dates are recorded, with one having been issued as a CD bootleg: "A Bananarama Moment" rather to the annoyance of the taper. Both recordings are wonderful, nominally audience tapes but as good as soundboard recordings, and the second night contains an impromptu version of "Nightingales", requested the previous night by an attendee of both concerts because it was his wedding song. A particular highlight is a delicate and moving piano led version of "Lions in My Own Garden": "The rumours have started that we were once young...".

Appropriately enough, the shows ended with "A Prisoner of the Past", and Prefab Sprout as a touring unit slid off into history.

There was to be one final performance together however, in June, close enough to Paddy's birthday that he was to receive a chorus of "Happy Birthday" from the crowd. Once again Stewart's trusty minidisc was in attendance, and Stewart himself was rewarded with a shout out from the stage. A cut down set was heavy on Steve McQueen and well received by a good humoured crowd.

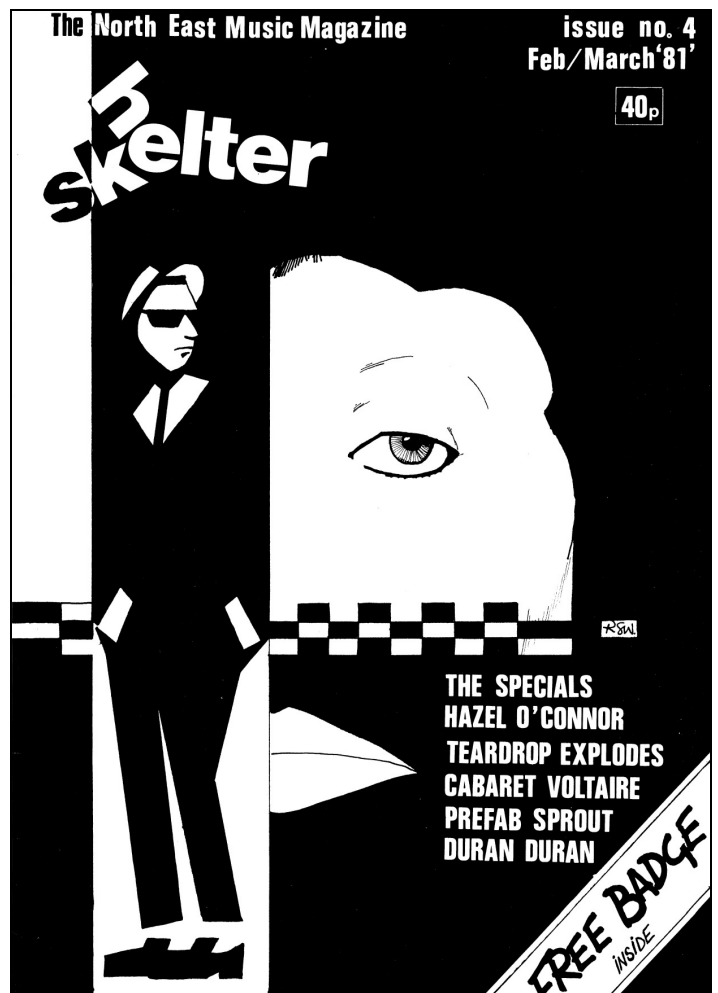
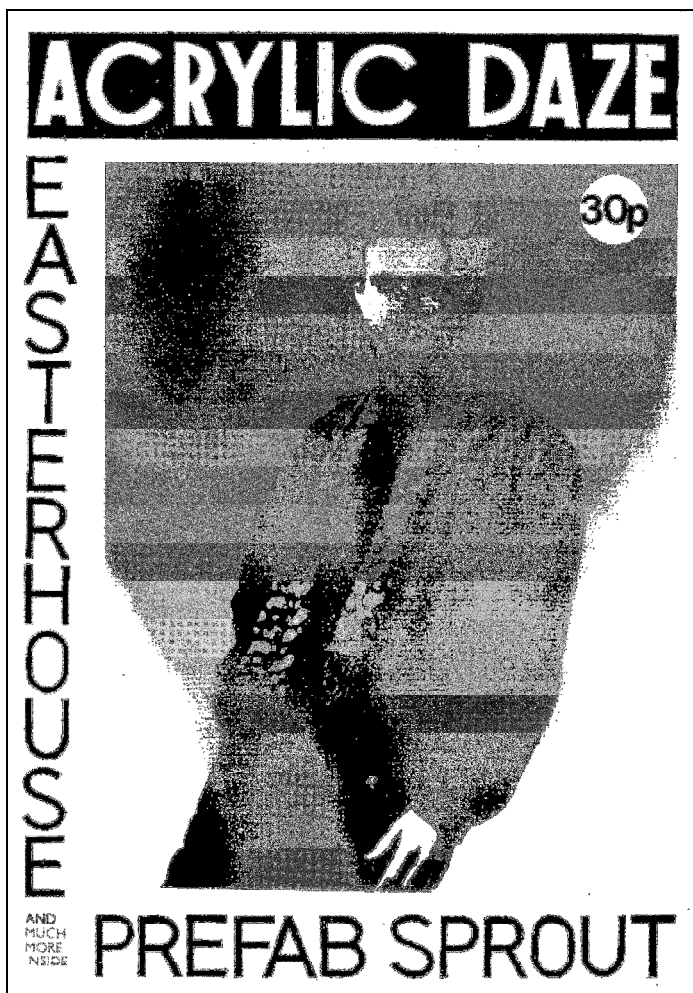
The show was filmed for "ITV at the Festivals" which featured "Cowboy Dreams", "Cars and Girls" and "When Love Breaks Down". It's a poignant performance in some ways, at one stage the sight of the crowd reflected in Paddy's dark glasses seems a metaphor for the self-imposed isolation from his fans that was to come in second half of the first decade of the 2000s. But twenty years on from the Domefest in Newcastle, with which I started this account, more or less, a more than fitting festival swansong in the summer sunshine.

A thin and tenuous thread then linked the history of the band as a live performing unit with the present day. The nature of Prefab Sprout, with wide separation between releases, has meant that the fan base forms in layers, with many of the older fans dropping out. So while fans did group together around the Prefab Sprout mailing list (Zorrophonic) or the official site, and eventually to the fan created Sproutnet, and MP3s of recordings were passed around, many of the original recordings disappeared from view or were just known from lists. The MP3 versions having been created largely at a time of slow internet access and small storage capacities weren't brilliant quality. And after pressure from Sony, even these were removed from Sproutnet, though the brilliant Tin Can Pot blog made many of them available for a considerable time. Eventually though they would have disappeared.

So it was that having come back to the band in 2009, I set myself an objective of finding as many recordings as possible in the best quality I could and archiving them securely. And this has been a very rewarding albeit often frustrating pursuit which is still continuing. Anyone reading this that has any material whatsoever, or is interesting in getting hold of recordings is encouraged to get in touch at [prefabsprout2010@googlemail.com](mailto:prefabsprout2010@googlemail.com) so I can continue the process.

The "Most Wanted" list includes such items as the Dominion gig and Hammersmith Palais gigs from 1985, and the missing gigs from 2000. But really anything related is of interest, recordings, video material, tickets stubs or even memories, which are collected together on the <http://psgigs.wikispaces.com> site. See you there!

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Early N.E. fanzines featuring Prefab Sprout interviews

"I don't set an awful lot of store by my surroundings. It sounds an awful cliché but I live in my head. I was always ambitious in a very limited way. I always had a desire to write and make things that would move people. If you've got any common sense then you know you've got to do a lot of work to bring those things to people. Sting, for example, is from Newcastle but doesn't live there. I've always backed off from the hard sell. If I can get away with working from home and never going out then I will."

Paddy McAloon, speaking to London Metro, 1999

# Interview with Paul Ludford, co-founder of Kitchenware Records

Extract from the interview between John Birch and Paul Ludford on 27 June 2011

- JB: Thanks for agreeing to speak with me, Paul. I'm particularly interested in the early days of Kitchenware, because you and Keith were the genesis so to speak, some of your earlier background... I think it's a story not many people know much about; certainly I don't,
- PL: Well the very early Kitchenware story goes back to Keith and I being at school. We were at school together. I don't really remember the infant school in any kind of detail. He left to go down south – something to do with his father's job. He then came back at 12 of 13 I think, and that's how we continued in our relationship really.
- JB: And you were both musical?
- PL: We both played in bands together, we had our own band for quite a few years you know, based in Prudhoe We reached a point where we enjoyed doing what we did, but were never particularly good enough to progress it any further from that.
- JB: What kind of stuff was it?
- PL: Rock music. Heavy rock (laughs). That was what we were into as kids. We'd both go and see Deep Purple and Free, and bands like that. Rory Gallagher, all those old 70s bands.
- JB: What was the name of your band?
- PL: Goodness me... I can't remember. No idea. We never got beyond playing the local youth club really.
- JB: But you were in a group at uni as well?
- PL: I didn't go to uni. And we weren't in a group at uni, no. As far as I'm aware I don't think Keith was. His musical involvement actually left when we packed in playing in the band together, which was probably around the age of sixteen.
- JB: And what instrument did you play?
- PL: I played guitar.
- JB: And Keith?
- PL: He played guitar too. I think I played up to the age of 17 or 18.
- JB: And then we come to Kitchenware, and I notice the first thing you organised was the Soul Kitchen.
- PL: What actually happened was that Keith went off to Northumbria University and did a business degree, and he went off to work with HMV when he'd finished that. He was working in various places around the country, but he came back to Newcastle, and I nowhere to stay so he came and stayed with me and my wife for a few months. And at that time he'd already been talking to some friends in London about doing some kind of club, promoting, that kind of thing. And he came back to Newcastle with the same idea, and he said do you fancy doing it? And I said, why not? And that's how it came about – purely on the basis that we wanted to run a club in Newcastle for alternative music that was different. I had money - we had collateral in the house – and we had some savings, so we used our savings to get things printed – leaflets, ads in the papers – and we used that to give us a kick start, and that's where Kitchenware first came off. And there weren't two of us there were three of us. The third person was Phil Mitchell.
- JB: Yeah, he's doing some writing now.
- PL: He is, yeah, but he was there from day 1. It's naturally assumed that it was just me and Keith but it wasn't. He worked with Keith at HMV, but also Phil was a DJ. And he was well into music, big time, right across the board from Indie stuff to Soul and R&B, so he had a major influence on how we ran the club. We ran a club for quite a few months, and we had varied successes. The first event we ever did was The Fire Engines from Edinburgh. But we always did things differently, and that was the input from Keith, but also from his girlfriend at the time who was a girl called Jenny, and she had quite a big influence on what we were doing.
- JB: Jenny Barratt?
- PL: Yeah, that's right. She had a couple of friends who were really interested in what we were doing as well, and at the first event, as well as doing The Fire Engines, we also did something called The Kiss, which was a display of photographs by Derek Hodges. So that was the support act... But it was very different. We were doing something that was multicultural at the time, and we continued with that for quite some time. It was just different stuff. We did things like Aztec Camera's first gig outside of Glasgow – Roddy was about 17 at the time – promoted as 'Glasgow kids in Newcastle' – and they were brilliant, absolutely great. We had Scottish bands Orange Juice, we had New Order. The New Order show was one of only three they did that year. It was the year after Curtis died.

They did Hull, Manchester and Newcastle, that's all they would do, and on the back of that we made a bit of money, and that money was put into making two records.

JB: Which ones?

PL: We did *The Sun Shines Here* by Hurrah, and *Roll on Summertime* by The Daintees.

JB: And those were the first two...

PL: Yeah, those were the first two.

JB: Are you still in regular touch with Keith?

PL: Yes, I see him frequently. When you are school friends and grow up together there's always a bond there and always will be. We wouldn't change anything from what's happened because we wouldn't be here where we are now if it hadn't in the way that it did. Keith is still passionate about the things that he does.

JB: Is there anything that you'd go back and change, Phil?

PL: No. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I'm happy the way it happened for the reasons why it happened. I wouldn't change a thing... but when it came to the point of leaving, I was ready to leave, and I knew that.

JB: How did Keith feel about that?

PL: All things come to an end at a particular point. It's just recognising it. Things are best not allowed to 'drag on' and become hopeless, or inadequate. Unless you're constantly evolving you become stale or complacent, and unhappy, ultimately. And at that point there, it's too late.

JB: And can you give us a final word on Paddy?

PL: Paddy's name is always talked about in a revered 'hush'. He was always, always a musician's and songwriter's favourite... he really was revered, not surprisingly. He was a very very talented person and still is. Let's Change the World with Music – I love it – Keith gave it to me before it got remixed and I thought it was absolutely brilliant. Some of the lyrics in there were really well put together. Hopefully there's going to be a few more...

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## COLLECTOR'S CORNER – Stuff that Sprout fans that collected down the years...

