

DRAFT INTERVIEW FOR SPANISH BLOG

1) First of all, I would like you to comment on each of your LPs, ¿what do you think about them now in 2006?

- From the Parish of Arthritis
- Five Died Filming this Lazy Lark
- Benny Hills Wardrobe
- The Best Bakers on the Island
- That Sentimental Slush

A == lot's of LP's to comment on. You missed out **Suburban crimes of every happiness** the album we released before **That sentimental slush**. They are all like snapshots of certain times in our lives. And if it were the old vinyl days they would all be double or triple LP's in some cases

After **Suburban Crimes of Every Happiness** which I thought was our masterpiece and was subsequently ignored I suffered with bad depression for a while and didn't think we would ever release another record. That's why the slush LP took so long ... well that and the usual cash flow problems

Five Die Filming this Lazy Lark seems to be a bit of a cult classic among spring's fans.

However to me they are all like the children that I never wanted in the first place! (ha, ha) . I have to let go they have they're own lives to lead once they're made

2) Going even further back in time, what do you think now of the Last Party music?

We have just put some tracks from the lost 3rd Album in Video format on youtube.com under 'last party' and were surprised at how good the tracks were having not heard them for quite a few years. We are slowly releasing all the last party stuff we have of a good quality on Bitter Springs cds (i.e. **Best Bakers on the Island**) and on the forthcoming '**Lighten up Volume 9**' (the worst butchers from the mainland) CD, which will contain 8 new songs plus Springs and Last Party rarities.

I think Last Party were great and hope that Radio One will eventually release the two Peel Sessions recorded in the late 80's/early 90's because 7 of the tracks have never been released elsewhere. And as John Peel said when the session was first aired 'rather good I think'.

We are at the moment making all the bitter springs releases plus the **Last Party 'Love Handles' lp** available to buy as downloads .

3) Since publishing "That Sentimental Slush" you have already published two more EPs, are the songs in these releases those that were meant to be included in a

hypothetical two-cd edition of “That Sentimental Slush”?

Yes they were but it's not good to have everything turn out as planned, there were in fact 4 more tracks that will form the basis of the **lighten up** cd - we are self financed and sometimes we have to wait to release/finish things but this enforced patience seems to work well in the long run, but can be fucking frustrating at the time and thanks to the lovely people at cargo we now have our own **Harvey records** label back and operational.

- 4) In an interview I read you said your records tend to be reactions to the previous one. If this is so, in which ways do you think your next album will react to “That Sentimental Slush”

You try not to repeat yourself with any of the records, although obviously by now we have a recognisable sound. (I hope). I find the recording process a bit demoralizing and I like to work fast. I'm hoping one day that there will be some kind of I-pod plug in on the side of your head and you can just download all of your ideas and sounds fully formed.

- 5) Could you tell me how a Bitter Springs' song comes into being? Do you get inspiration from literature, real anecdotes, etc.?

No set patterns to springs songs I'll take music and ideas from anywhere, inspiration strikes when you least expect it. I've been known to knock on strangers doors and ask to borrow a pen, but I'll also be thorough in research like in 'reservoir dogs' when they worked out exactly how long it would take Tim Roth to bleed to death - I do the same lyric wise. It's the minor details that will count in the long run. Just wrote one this morning **fooled by pop, glad to be gullible**, I think I've said before that daily life is so preposterous you only have to look around you so there's not really much need to make things up.

- 6) I actually wanted to ask you something about literature and I found in your myspace list of influences the name of Ian McEwan, how much of a fan are you of his books, and what do you like about him?

I'm into following a writer like you would a band you just have to wait a bit longer for the next release. I find with English writers I like and Jeanette Winterson, Ian McEwan, Tim Lott, Russell Hoban being particular favourites, the stuff they write, I don't know how, but it feels like your own thoughts! A bit spooky sometimes.

- 7) If we talk about films, a good reference is Mike Leigh, what is your favourite of his movies?

I couldn't say which is my favourite but maybe my favourite performance is Timothy Spall in secrets and lies, and I do have a soft spot for 'Career Girls'. I grew up on Mike Leigh films - all part of my education. Oh what about 'Nuts in May' brilliant oh and what about David Thewlis's Mark E Smith impression in 'Naked' ... stop me...

- 8) I also read among your influences the names of Go-betweens, Bowie, Sparks, Leonard Cohen, etc. all of them can be traced in your songs. But you don't mention

many names from the 90s, even though some people like to compare you with Pulp –and yes, they are in a way an 80s band- so my question is the following: what do you think about 90s Brit-pop?

I can't even remember what Britpop was now other than Blur and Oasis and I preferred Blur of the two they didn't sell out like Oasis because they began by being a sell out so they could only get better and they did while Oasis swapped attitude and balls for champagne and north London .

9) Do you like Italian singer Paolo Conte? I find that you have some points in common, since both of you write songs that are celebration's of life's complexities and human being's wide range of emotions without being pessimistic or afraid of portraying human foibles.

Yes I have 2 Paolo Conte LPs I love the voice and I think it's a bonus that I don't speak the language because he could be singing about waiting for the kettle to boil or eating a bagel but I can imagine he's answering all the questions in the universe - it's the same for me with 'Edith Piaf' and 'Ihasa de Sela' except I believe they are asking me to make love to them (ha ha) not really but I'm all for misinterpretation of lyrics. I am told by those that know me well that I am deaf so I always miss hear things. I don't consider myself pessimistic I am an optimistic fatalist ... there's always tomorrow get up and try again

10) And, what do you think about British indie-music nowadays? Which albums have you bought recently?

I find it hard to define indie really but groups like ourselves and someone like. Say Comet Gain or Spearmint maybe who steer clear of big labels. I can't speak for them but we've never done that by choice - I might add but we'd never go chasing labels either, you earn a certain freedom doing the hard slog but it's an absolute nightmare trying to even get your records heard without the big money men behind you. Recent albums I have purchased are Born Sandy Devotional by the Triffids which i don't think is as good as calenture - I like the Amy Winehouse and the new Sonic Youth and Bob Dylan's Modern Times is brilliant and my girlfriend got me the 'Complete Fall sessions' for Xmas which is essential listening . Spains Num 9 the glow worms resistance the Richard Hawley LP Coles corner oh and I loved the last 'Strokes' lp.

11) In the 80s there used to be loads of bands with a political streak, or else trying to continue a tradition of interpreting British identity from the perspective of a pop song. There are not so many bands now trying to do that, and I think Bitter Springs is one example of a band that does follow that tradition which I like so much. Why do you think British bands –even those working in an independent environment- avoid politics and social realism nowadays?

The bands I grew up with and respected usually had a strong identity and views from people like the Jam and Dexy's Midnight Runners to The Fall, The Gang of Four, The Raincoats, Slits and the Au-pairs and even before that Dylan, Bowie, Sparks and Steely Dan always seemed to have strong individual personality's which came out in the music. That's something we at the springs always strive for - speak your mind in your

own language and you'll always get my vote. As for avoiding politics and social realism I guess it's largely a business decision and the springs aren't a business ... we're a band

I'll say the political sarcasm of Randy Newman was influential to me as well

12) The Bitter Springs have repeatedly collaborated with Vic Godard, when did you start working together, and what is the next thing you plan to do with him?

We got Vic to sing a duet with me on our first LP *from the parish of arthritis* I was a big fan of his (still am) he's an original a one off, but I don't think he comes from the same planet as the rest of us. We still play together occasionally but it's hard when there is so much springs music to be played. We are all still friends and I sing and the springs play on *Working Classes*, a song from our Blackpool sessions, which is on Vic's my space.

13) Being the Go-Betweens my favourite band I totally agree with something you said in an interview: "Actually the idea of a world without Grant McLennan and Robert singing together their wonderful songs is something very sad" How and when did you start listening to them? What aspects of their music are you most interested on?

Yes but thinking about it now when they did sing together it was sad - they always evoked that emotion. I can't remember when I first heard them but I have just about all their records and we even got to play with them at the Jazz Café in London when they played as just 'Grant and Robert' a couple of years back .

14) Some of the songs in your last album have a nocturne flavour, if you know what I mean; it seems an ideal album to listen to at night. Was this intentional?

As I said earlier I was very down after the 'Suburban crimes LP' was overlooked by almost everyone so some of that would have spilled over into the LP, but no the nocturnal flavour wasn't intentional, but I like the idea of that! One of my all time favourite lps is Neil young 'On The Beach' and that is a perfect night time record.

15) Finally, what are your plans for 2007?

We have just started rehearsing again after Xmas. The *lighten up volume 9 (the worst butchers from the mainland)* LP is what we aim to finish first it has a lovely sleeve by American artist Alex Abajian, who has done sleeves for us in the past. The lead off track will probably be *My life as a dog* which is a story about a man who impregnates his dog/bitch and the puppies look like dog versions of him. We hope to get Terry Edwards to play trumpet on that one, and it might become our first ever online only singles. Along with *Don't write song about it* there's a cover version of Bobby Womack's *Harry Hippy* on there relocated to Kingston upon Thames. Ollie Cherer gave me 4 tunes last year and one or 2 of those could appear on the album, after that we will start work on *The Family Album* a song cycle thing concerning one family's up's and downs.

I wrote some lyrics for and sang on a brilliant *Piano Magic* song called *England's always better* it should be on their next LP which I think may be called *Part Monster* I sang it live with them at their 10th anniversary show in London just before Xmas We hope to work together again sometime in 2007 on songs I've been putting aside For an album with the idea of Glen Johnson producing *The bitter magic of the piano*

springs that would be a nice title wouldn't it?

We are making the entire back catalogue available through I-tunes. Our first gig of the year will be in **Barcelona** on February the 24th at the mini festival details are here www.minifestival.net and we play the **London** spitz on the 3rd of March for a **Penny Black music** Night.

Thanks for taking an interest in the world of Bitter Springs
All the best to you and yours for 2007
Simon