

# BRUM BEAT

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*Mike  
Davies*

the  
section  
with no  
name

# TOUGH STUFF

**TRUE GRIT...  
ALBUM PREVIEW  
PLUS INTERVIEW**

● **CENTRE PAGES**

*PIC: PAUL CONWAY*





Alright, so you've heard it all before, yet another local band on the verge of a major record deal. Monkey Messiah reckon they've got the edge they need. It's their determination to do things right (thinks lead singer Lorraine, who's as talented and versatile as most acclaimed vocalists) that helps make the Monkeys that little bit special. Although they formed over two years ago, it's only recently that MM have appeared from the woodwork and launched themselves on the Brum gig circuit. So where've they been all this time?

"Well it's taken this long to find the right line up of musicians who have the right attitude, 100% commitment for this group, and can work well together."

The majority of the time has been spent with them writing songs together, rehearsing and developing their style of music, something they believe in more than their undeniably strong visual image: "There's no room for pretentiousness or egotism. It's the style of the music, rather than image, that's more important. It has to be right before we feel satisfied and confident to perform."

Their music, like most, has its comparisons, but with influences ranging from Ella Fitzgerald to Elvis Costello and the ubiquitous James Brown, they are adamant that their influences are not consciously included in their songs. So what

# So The Story Goes

YASMIN SALEH and ROB BROWN  
meet MONKEY MESSIAH



type of music is it? "Well it's danceable, but cannot be classed as disco music. It's commercial at the same time ... individual." If that sounds vague it's because they want their music to cross over and appeal to a broader spectrum of the public. "The idea is to produce music that will be heard in people's

front rooms as well as in the clubs."

With five members they find it easier to bounce ideas off each other, and with their influences that's no easy thing: "That's why it's so important to work well together and find people who can do this."

Lead Monkey, Lorraine, not only sings and plays guitar but also writes most of the lyrics: "The words of the songs are based on social observations — it's not as simple or clichéd as 'boy meets girl' but more realistic and about broader subjects."

Although only having recently made a debut in Birmingham, the group reckon live work is definitely their forte, thinking along the lines that if they have a good time, then the audience does. Their live appearances previously have all been in the south, playing in 'clichéd London clubs', something they've not particularly enjoyed but done so because it's part of the process groups go through to get noticed.

Monkey Messiah are determined not to be a short-lived thing, something they feel they would be if they signed to one of the independents, and certainly enough work has gone into launching them on the unsuspecting public. Their style is as individual as they can get it, whilst still maintaining that accessible edge; they themselves feel their sound is 'pretty timeless'.

With 'So The Story Goes' as their ideal choice for single material, it's only a matter of time. Their strong image and love of playing live all go together well, but whether Monkey Messiah are really heralding something new or are just plain out of their trees waits to be seen.

## the section with no name

Well, sad to say, despite last month's teaser, it will be another case of "No show Joe (Ely)" aka Earl Epiphone during this particular September. That however, is no reason to get low down and waste the rest of this month's Section, beemoaning the third Ely tour cancellation, this year so far. Life is too precious and fleeting a moment, for that.

September has crept up on us. The days of early morning condensation on the car windows approach; maybe we will have an Indian Summer. Alternatively, how long is this piece of string? And while we're about it, here is this

month's grist for the acoustic and miscellaneous mill.

Thursday 8th sees the upstairs room at The Junction, High Street, Harborne play host to that aptly/curiously/strangely named (you choose) duo, The Silly Sisters. In other words, Maddy Prior and June Prior have teamed up again; the pretext being, the promotion of their new album on the Topic label, "No more to the dance". Two weeks later, (22th September for those among you, hard of counting), Messrs Gregson and Collister return to that venue for their third gig there, in the last couple of years. Presumably the Gregson demos promised earlier in the year, are still on the cards to become a vinyl reality. As I mentioned in the August edition, the Lancashire Lad and the fair one from the Isle of Man, also play The Woodman in Kingswinford on the 9th of this month. September in Harborne, draws to a close on 29th September, with some Celtic folk n' roll from, Spirit of the West.

Talking about double doses of the same (ala G & C), then that Antipodean Scot, Eric Bogle can be seen on consecutive nights in the area. Folk n' protest in a nutshell, are what this man is about. On Friday 9th, Eric plays the Bell and Pump Folk Club, Waterworks Road, Edgbaston, while on the following evening, he heads for the hushed environs of the Village Hall in upstate Trysull. The promoters of the latter gig are the Kingswinford based, Acoustic Roots Organisation. On Monday 19th September, also at Trysull, they present the double bill of American guitar player Duck Baker, and our own

John Renbourn. A night for some neat guitar picking, no doubt. Renbourn's old Transatlantic recordings from the sixties, are about to enjoy another lease of life, via the Brentford based Demon label. Look out for those, in your local record store. And we close this paragraph as we began, with The Bogle. He plays the Red Lion Folk Club, Kings Heath on the opened day of next month. I make that Saturday 1st October.

Since we have strayed into October, just a quick mention for Mary Margaret's life long friend, Nancy Griffith. She is undertaking another UK tour, and can be seen this time around, backed by her Blue Moon Orchestra, at the Hummingbird in Dale End on Thursday 6th October. Methinks that the gap between May and October is too small, so let's see if the punters respond with a full house, on this occasion.

Regarding gigs on a grander scale, that aggregation of Emerald Isle virtuosos, Patrick Street, can be seen at the Irish Centre, High Street, Digbeth on Friday 16th.

Closer to home geographically, we close out this month, with that beacon of musical delight in Kings Norton, the Breedon Bar and Border Cafe. On the menu this month, we have songwriter Eddie Walker opening the proceedings on 1st September. That good humoured bluegrass quartet from Shropshire, Wrekin Havoc are there on Sunday 4th. On Thursday 15th, under the title of Meltdown, a trio of Cardiff based bands — The Howling Sleepers, The River Ghosts and Cara — will be presenting their wares. Two

days later, American singer Mark Moseley and his band, stop off at the Breedon, while on Sunday 18th local blues band Smokehouse Brown, crank out a few more riffs.

Pride of place this month at the Breedon, must go to the ambitious three day British Songwriters Festival which commences on Friday 23rd September. On the opening night, we have guitarist extraordinaire Isaac Guillory and singer/songwriter Jon Strong. On Saturday, Jon is featured again, plus bluesman Kevin Brown and Britain's answer to those folk/country songwriters produced in Austin, Texas — Terry Clarke. On the final night, Kevin and Terry are accompanied by blues influenced singer/songwriter, Sally Barker. Landlord Bob Moore, is to be heartily congratulated for this piece of enterprise. While we're on the subject of Specials, just a quick mention for the four day Breedon Blues Festival in October — more details, next month.

Finally, honky tonker Pinto Bennett and his band of Famous Motel Cowboys return to the Breedon on Thursday 29th September, and on October 1st the cajun n' rock rhythms of the Balham Alligators can be heard. Scandinavian bluesman Hans Thessink, is at the Breedon, on the following evening. STOP PRESS: It would appear that Richard Thompson is about to surface with a new album on the Capital label, and as a forerunner to this event, he is undertaking a short British tour. Check your local press nearer the time, but rumour has it, that he is pencilled in for an appearance at The Junction on Thursday 15th September.

ARTHUR WOOD

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