



The Punters club



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CUP EVE
MONDAY 4TH NOVEMBER

WHO
XAVIER J
MOON TANG

Stack of newspapers and magazines



The Punters Club



the punters club

betty wade-ennis and tony ennis

betty

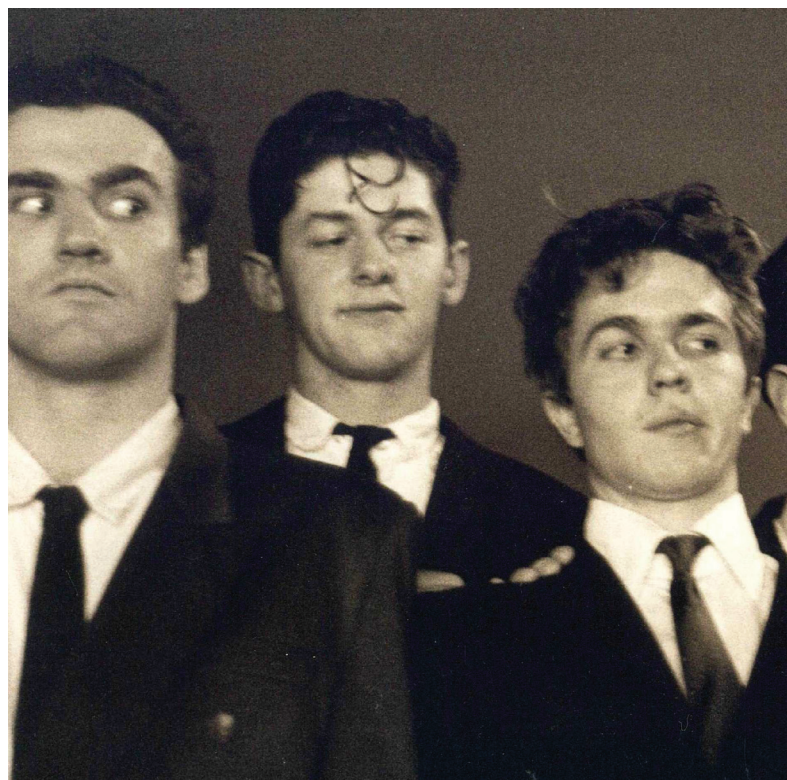
Many years were misspent with musicians, students, artists and thespians in the shared houses of Carlton, then I moved to Fitzroy. It was cheaper to rent houses and because the beginnings of an underground subculture was emerging in Brunswick Street. The Black Cat had opened along with the Grub Street Bookstore. Fetish, a clothing and accessories shop stood out for me as did Polyester Records. I was drawn to the magnificence of the Town Hall in a one way back street, the empty red brick factories, the industrial lanes and alleys, sweatshops, brothels and the rows and rows of tiny dark single fronted workers cottages. The historic and once magnificent huge inner city terrace houses had been left to rot and die and were now rented out to many a student, musician, artist and actor. Uneven floors, Kookaburra stoves, vintage linoleum and even outside loos were the order of the day. There was the Brunswick Street Laundromat which was looked after by Bert who wore a none too clean white singlet both in winter and summer.

Nearby Gertrude Street was once home to the earliest clinics for sexually transmitted diseases giving Brunswick Street just the right underground seedy ambiance for the alternative arts to thrive.

The very early 80s saw 3RRR radio move to Victoria Street Fitzroy. This community radio station was also instrumental in developing the independent music culture of Brunswick Street that was to come.

The street was bohemian, bold and exciting. The gay community, the Koori community, the alternative community, the migrants in the high rise commission flats, all contributed to and coexisted in Brunswick Street. Artist's studios, cafés, galleries and interesting shops sprang up such as Rhumbarellas, Marios, The Fitz, Pigdale, the Vegie Bar and Scally and Trombones.

I moved from Gore Street to Moor Street. I had worked with Norma Tullo and Candy Shoes then I took a year off and 'door bitched' in dance clubs such as Barbarellas in Smith Street then owned by Bongo Starky of Skyhook's fame.



In 1986 I moved to Rose Street right next to the Moonee Valley Hotel – soon to become the Punters Club. I met with Rob and Rick – the new owners. We chatted about live music, I threw in some band names – to be honest, the rest is a bit of a blur.

The growth of The Punters was an organic process incorporating the groundswell of live music and the street scene. It was the place to be, the bar staff came from the street and the two became one around the pool table in that grungy front bar. Linda Gebar skilfully steered the band bookings and established the venue as host to the abundant, independent, and more importantly the original bands of the day and the dedicated community of punters soon followed.

Night after night. Band and after band. Linda should be credited for launching the careers of many, Frente!, Magic Dirt, Something for Kate, Spiderbait, the list is endless, absolutely everybody! Many of today's Who's Who played the Punters.

Wild times ensued. The laneway between my house and the hotel was often full of people smoking pot and littered with syringes, bottles, cans and cigarette butts. I heard many a drunken argument and lover's tiff and lover's... Every now and then I would ring the boys and get them to shoo off some of the



revellers. Most nights the pub would be chockers with wall to wall bodies spilling out on to the street. One would take a punt on whether the bands would be any good or not. The reputation of the venue increased with quality local bands like Ton Up Pirates and the Eclectic Rococo Pops and the dedicated community became constant. The hotel soon applied for a 3 am licence and the usual noise objections came flooding in. Since I lived next door I was able to vouch for the pub's credibility and responsibility. They got the licence but had to make some modifications and sound proof the back of the hotel facing the residents. Thankfully we also got a gate put on our shared laneway. Renovations began and the toilets were updated from the 1950 concrete bunkers. The stage was lined with a lead curtain and drapes and the entrance changed to Rose Street. The Punters Club success soon spread to the Evelyn Hotel on the other side of Brunswick Street, which had been utilizing bands for drink sales also. Eventually the two venues started running cross street events where they would time the bands to stop and start in sync so you could see 6 bands (sometimes more) in an evening. Bands did a full 60 minute set of original songs and changeovers took 30 minutes. There was much meandering and chatting between bands and punters. Other venues came and went on Brunswick Street

such as the Royal Derby, which housed the early *Beat* magazine upstairs.

Meanwhile – over in St Kilda, the other seedy hub and breeding ground of the Melbourne music sub culture, Tony Ennis was making his way in the Indie music scene. Tony grew up in Elizabeth, South Australia, number 3 in a family of 6 Irish Catholic immigrants shipped over to feed the Australian factories.

He landed in October 1965 on the good ship Fairstar via the Suez Canal. His pregnant mother had 4 children, aged between 11 and 3, housed in barracks where the Adelaide Festival Theatre now stands.

tony

School was nothing much, just passing time till I grew up. My first job was pumping gas on weekends. I left school to labour in a spray insulation business insulating massive chicken sheds a mile long. This was followed by a stint in GMH. I eventually ended as a recession casualty and became unemployed in 1977. This presented the opportunity to learn new skills in the live music industry, in lighting, sound, production management, band management, radio production, announcing and programming for radio, journalism and script writing. All of which kept me in good stead once I left Adelaide in 1985.

I was good mates with the Armiger brothers through my teen years in Elizabeth and this continued through my early 20s working in and around bands and the music scene. I learnt to mix for The Immigrants, with Keith, Andy and Michael Armiger, making up the front line of the band. I got pretty good at mixing and picked up some great bands to work for over the years. The Armigers left Adelaide for Melbourne while I was working on a voluntary basis during the day at 5UV radio and mixing bands in the evenings for cash.

I started playing in bands, forming TutuZ with Steve Matters from the band The Empty Vessels. This was the first time I had endeavoured to be the vocalist and write/co-write a whole set of songs. In less than 3 months we were gigging. People liked our music, but it was all too fast. I was very green and unsure of myself standing in front of this band. In retrospect my first band was a ripper, with very talented and experienced musicians.

Frank Moylan and I had met on the night of my sister's wedding. Our paths kept crossing and we ended up hanging out and going to gigs around Adelaide. We hung with the same crowd over a few years peaking around 1983 when I was living at the decommissioned North Adelaide Stationmaster's residence with the McInerneys. I was heavily involved with Radio 5UV producing radio shows, announcing, programming and coordinating the Rock'n'Roll segments of the station and eventually took over the Top Ten segment of Student Radio to which I invited Frank to take part along with Monica McInerney (author) as co-presenters of what became the Top 12 (just to be different). We presented the alternative music of the day, Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson, U2, along with Aussie bands like The Models, Hunters and Collectors, Midnight Oil, The Go Betweens and The Laughing Clowns from the national scene and local bands like the Screaming Believers, The Del Webb Explosion, The Checkers, July 14, The Empty Vessels, Speedboat and many more.

Somewhere in the middle of all this I meet Betty in early 1984. She arrived at my house with Keith Armiger on a flying visit from Melbourne. We would occasionally meet over the next few years.

Melbourne 1985 was the big unplanned move. My girlfriend at the time had already moved so we shacked up again in Mitford Street, St Kilda. It was a tumultuous arrangement that didn't really work and I left for Sydney after 6 months, once again unplanned with a bass and amp, case of clothes and an old Valiant VE sedan. I was called back from Sydney to Melbourne by Atlantis Recording Studios to do some vocals on a project album called 'A Study in Feasibility' on which I sang 'Money, Drink, Reform, Revenge' and 'Annemarie' So I retrieved the Valiant VE from Sydney and moved back, this time into South Yarra in a large share house. Then I managed to procure a flat in Fitzroy Street, St Kilda. Once again I found myself living with my ex-girlfriend. Frank Moylan was sharing a flat with Monica McInerney around the corner in Park Street and we started hanging out together again. We soon put together a band, myself on bass, with Keith Armiger as main vocalist and guitar, called The Immigrants 2, shortly joined by guitarist Phillip Wales (Harem Scarem). We eventually played our first and only gig at the Prince of Wales in St Kilda under the

moniker of The Tobys. Keith left the band and Frank took over the vocals and rhythm guitar. Jonathan Williamson (Sea Stories), was imported to relieve Frank on the drum kit. Shortly after Stephen Reno and Nigel Bertram were added on sax and trumpet. Seven was born and rearing to go.

The band had already done its first recording before Keith left, being 'The Older You Get' and 'Walk', on which Frank redid the vocals and added the brass for demos. The gigs started to happen. Seven went on to record quite a bit of material in the Screaming at the Mirror LP and Screaming at the Mirror 2. Co-operative compilation albums of Melbourne bands on Giggle Records were produced by Ticklish Productions, another significant Brunswick Street local independent record label, run by Bo (Robert Boehm) and Perry Kenrick, which featured bands such as The Mavis's, Clowns Smiling Backwards and Pray TV.

The 6, rather dapper lads of Seven, in suits and ties, soon became regulars of the underground scene. We were featured in *Beat* magazine and in the cassette/booklet fanzine *Lemon*. The bands debut, Grey Mountain, was funded from live playing fees. It cost a fortune for the studio time, Mark Woods as producer, the mastering, pressing, printing of the album, posters and the EP launch postcards. The launch on the 7th of the 7th, 1989 was a huge success. People were spilling out onto the street unable to get into the Punters Club front bar that night.

Around this time Frank Moylan moved into the house in Rose St with me. As a fun project we rehearsed up a throwaway band called Colonial V Knees with Greg Bainbridge, Jon Campbell in the lounge room. I toyed with some backing vocals, then we recorded one track 'Plastic Jesus' with Simon Grounds, in the mattress lined, back room studio of his house and of course our first live performance was at the Punters.

betty

When Tony moved into Rose Street it didn't take long before we were an item. We sat up talking all night for the first couple of nights and it wasn't long before the sparks merged into a continuous state of domestic merriment and the secret love story of Brunswick Street began – are they or aren't they? It was dynamic, far too precious to be talked



about, scrutinised and pressured by others. On November 15th 1989 we had a secret marriage at the house – officiated by the local Brunswick Street parish priest who looked just like Spencer Tracey. Susan Drobits and Monica McInerney played bridesmaid and best man. Rick and Rob from hotel clued in to what was happening and spontaneously gifted us a bottle of their best vodka. We were dressed up, thinking we looked pretty damn good in our finery. We strutted off down Brunswick Street and had cocktails.

By 1989 the Punters had their favourites and Rob and Rick decided to commission and release an album. They hired producer Mark Woods to record the bands in the venue on May 25, 26 and 27 in 1989. Seven often played at the Punters Club and the band was included on the Hair of the Dog, Live at the Punters Club LP. Two tracks 'Drive' and 'Summer' were recorded in front of a live audience. The album also featured 2 songs each from Intoxica, The Fish John West Rejects, The Hollowmen, The Widdershins and one track from These Future Kings. Frank eventually left Seven, as did Nigel and the rest continued for a few years with Andrew Armiger on vocals before melting away to oblivion.

Phil Wales and Tony went on to do further projects including 7 tracks on a Little Murders album. Tony worked again with Jonathan Williamson in a band call Boho Radio, again gracing the Punters Club stage, but generally they all went their own ways. Tony continued to play in Brunswick Street venues in various outfits including, FACT with Sam Sejavka, The Blow Up Dolls, Tumbledream, The Laughing Dementos and Pup Knuckle.

In the early 1990s we moved out of Rose Street back to Tony's old flat in Fitzroy Street, St Kilda. We applied our combined management, organisational, creative and street smart skills and created Wade Management and a record company called Ism Records and then proceeded to put our



skills to work in the entertainment industry in events and band management.

Our stable of performers included Kerri Simpson's VeVe, Sam Sejavka and Fact, Hard Candy, Rob Crow and the Victory Girls and Scarecrow Tiggy, to name a few. Our production management clients included the Melbourne International Jazz Festival (first and second years), the Maverick Arts Festival, the Melbourne International Fringe Festival and Festival Club and Fringe Fashion. In those early days we were doing the artwork by hand, cut and pasting (with glue) photocopying, making posters, wrapping them around telegraph poles, walking Brunswick and other streets begging café owners to put up our posters – writing our little blurbs for *Beat* and *Inpress*,

scrounging enough money to advertise. I think it was easier then, due to many more independent radio stations, and record stores, of which I did many a promo window display – Polyester, Gaslight, Au Go Go, Missing Link, Readings – I loved doing them. We consistently trekked back across town to Brunswick Street to gigs at the Punters and the Evelyn Hotel, then booked by Mary Mihelakos.

In 1993 Matt Everett took over as licensee, Richard Moffat took over the band bookings and from an upstairs room started producing the Punters monthly mag aptly named *The Form Guide* and ran another record label Way Over There. The hotel continued with stellar line ups as the new Indie scene developed and Brunswick Street got groovier.

It was a phenomenal time of amazing art and music, too many bands to name here. Eventually the best era for live music in Brunswick Street came to an end with rising rents in the increasingly gentrified Fitzroy forcing The Punters Club out of business in February 2002.

Through this period I was still working part time in retail in Ackland Street, 'door bitching' at the Lizard Lounge dance club in Chapel Street. For a few years I worked at the Melbourne Fringe Festival – in 94 as Festival Club Coordinator, in 95 as Co-Organiser of the inaugural Fringe Fashion Awards Show in the Gershwin Room at the Esplanade Hotel and in 96 as the Music Coordinator for the Brunswick Street Parade.

More recently Tony is experimenting with digital recording, bringing musos together for multitrack recording jams. Betty continues as Business Management for small Arts and Entertainment organisations and is a Bespoke Shoe Maker.

