

FACE OF CHEAM AUGUST 2005

Hello.

Can you believe it is ten years since Blur (middle class Essex lads) and Oasis (Mancunian hairy yobbos) fought it out for number one with 'Country House' and 'Roll With It'? In the end both records were among their worst singles ever released and no one now really cares that 'Country House' got to number one. I mention this now as BBC4 had a recent Britpop night showing the rise and fall of British music together with Mr Blair's rise to prominence and possible failure to deliver. Was this social phenomena due to a new outlook on life and people wanting a revolution? In part. There are two reasons that Britpop took off. One – in the early nineties we had a recession due to the Tory government. Young adults could not find proper work and either went to places such as art college, got building site jobs or signed on. Either way they had too much time on their hands and decided to join a band. At a similar time Radio One sacked DLT (hairy cornflake) and other 50 something DJs who were playing Elton John and other middle of the road artist (together with Stock, Aitken & Waterman artists) and replaced them with young DJs with the instruction to find proper new bands to play instead. With such a deluge of delinquents to choose from the British music scene could not fail. Come Mr Blair getting in, and Britain getting a better economy the number of new bands decreased. John Walsh, author of *The Last Party*, put Suede as a key figure. Rubbish, they were an art house band caught up in the sudden rise of the music scene led by the two best bands who fought it out ten years ago, much in the same way the Charlatans were (who started a few years earlier in the baggy Manc scene). Had not Oasis, Blur, Pulp and others come along, they would have been now looked at in a similar vein to Ride and Carter who just didn't last that far to get on the bandwagon. Come another recession, a similar thing may occur, as these things tend to go in cycles. Late seventies had punk, nineties had Britpop so I reckon we're due about four to five years time before there is another deluge of good and bad bands.

All this leads me nicely to report on Oasis at Hammersmith on 26th May. Probably in my top five gigs of all time (not topping Shampoo at the Hanover Grand 1993). The reason they have lasted and others haven't (including Blur and Pulp) is because even when they are bad, they have better tunes than most. Now with only Noel and Liam remaining of the original members they are more solid and have good musicians around them. Not having much time for drummers, even Zak Starkey impressed me. An encore of 'Wonderwall', 'Don't Look Back In Anger' and The Who's 'My Generation' says it all.

Going back to pre-Britpop, another band that didn't quite last the distance was Transvision Vamp. A Blondie influenced garage band fronted by the gorgeous Wendy James. She is now back in the public eye with her new band Racine.
<http://www.theracineworld.com/index.html>

A dream came true for me when after her show at Pop in Soho, I met her and got her to sign the CD I just got (Racine, *Number One*). Not only did she sign it, I got a kiss on the cheek which I haven't washed since.

Other artists seen recently include Garbage who played a very good best of set at Brixton and Suzanne Vega's excellent acoustic show at the Anvil in Basingstoke. Her version of 'Marlene on the Wall' was worth the admittance alone.

PUBS

So Southampton have been relegated. The plus side is this means new places to visit and pubs to report on. So far, Sheffield (very damp and rainy) and Luton have been visited and neither seemed impressive. You will see two crawl write up on this site which I have been involved in, the Chiltern Line railway luckily done just a matter of days before the tunnel Tesco were building above collapsed and the Monopoly crawl of Brighton, where I had a lack of concentration and was refused admittance of a pub due to drunkenness. (me - surely not?). Basingstoke and Harlow were awful places except in the latter town, the Moorhen by the river and the Hare were both traditional good pubs. Shame about their local town. As far as barmaids go look no further than Richmond. The mandatory outfits the young foreign student barmaids wear down the Slug & Lettuce are fantastic, and you'll be surprised at the other places around there. Only other one to note has been the slightly Goth looking girl in the Young's pub, The Hammersmith Ram, in Hammersmith. Finally, albeit still very good, I noticed a slight fall in quality in the Brewery Tap in Wimbledon village. Now £3.00 a pint of Fosters, the vinyl juke box has been removed and replaced with an iPod type thingy! Need to get it sorted out if you ask me!

A good ale pub was found in Wareham called the Duke of Wellington. Six real ales and one real cider. I plumped for a half of Solar Power, which was one of the best Caffrey style ales I have tasted. Worth seeking out although I could not find it at the following function

OLYMPIA BEER FESTIVAL

The annual beer festival at Olympia was done twice by myself this year. Chas n Dave played again and were tremendous and on the Friday we saw a Rolling Stones cover band. It was up to its usual standard with the programme notes certainly helping. A few beardy weirdies around, but also a few groups clearly taking the Michael out of this element. Definitely go next year if you can.

SULPHUR

Nothing to report as Matt is in South Africa for six weeks. Mr Lowe of what is now called The Winter is in the middle of planning a Cheamstock Two, which hopefully we'll be at.

Till next time

Rich (The Face Of Cheam)