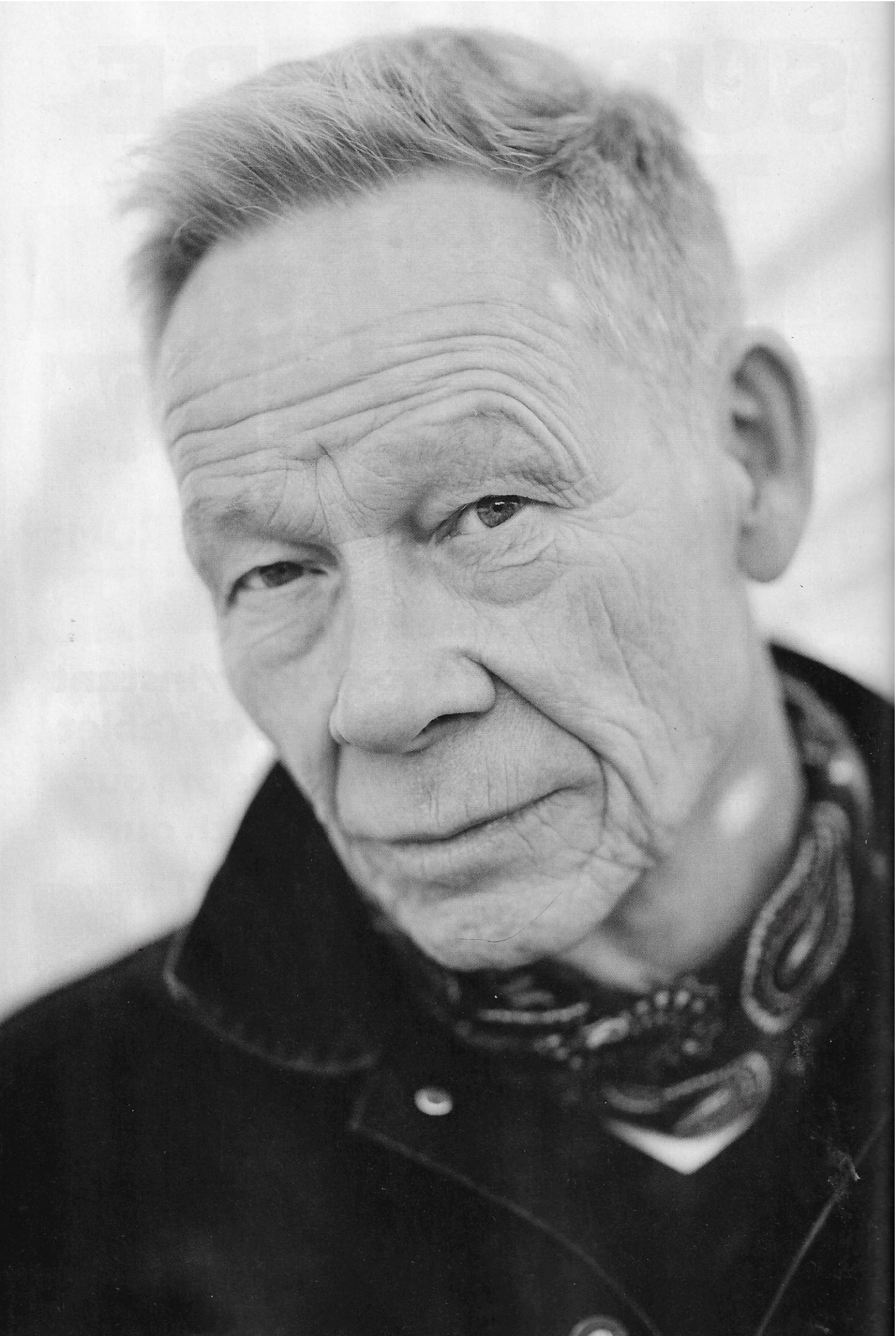




THE PROFESSIONALS
'SNAFU'
PRESS BOOK
Oct/Nov/Dec 2021



Surviving the car crash of the Sex Pistols, then a car crash with The Professionals, punk's percussion pathfinder remains sanguine, albeit wise to his (ahem) public image. "People don't let you grow up from being a Pistol," says Paul Cook.

Interview by **PAT GILBERT** • Portrait by **ANDREW COTTERILL**

THERE IS VERY LITTLE THAT'S OUTWARDLY seditious about the gleaming bar area of the Hilton hotel in Islington, north London, especially on a quiet Sunday lunchtime. But seated at a corner table is a man once considered so dangerous to society he would be regularly attacked in the street. Today, Paul Cook – slim-built, stylishly dressed in dark jeans, black corduroy jacket and sage-green neckerchief – looks unlikely to spark a ruck. But the expectations that come with being a former member of the world's most notorious band can still prove an unwanted burden.

"I was round a mate's house and he'd put this spread on," chuckles Cook, now 65, raspily. "He said this bizarre thing: 'Fucking hell – a Sex Pistol eating olives! I never thought I'd see the day...' I thought, Where are you coming from with this?! People don't let you grow up and out from being a Pistol."

Often tagged the 'quiet' Pistol, and rarely interviewed (now as then) at length, Cook's contribution to the group was nevertheless immeasurable. Manifestly, he kept the beat with an economy and precision that invested the Pistols' music with uncommon power and punch, abetted by an almost telepathic relationship with guitarist Steve Jones. But he and Jones – literally thick-as-thieves since their early teens in Hammersmith, west London – also brought a whiff of genuine villainy to the Pistols: even their

'Cook'n'Jones' sobriquet had the ring of a couple of rough-diamond Jack-the-lads from an episode of *The Sweeney*.

Yet while in the early '70s Jones pursued a full-time career as a house-breaker, amassing the proto-Sex Pistols' backline in the process, the drummer worked as an apprentice electrician at Watney's Stag brewery in Mortlake. Genial and straight-talking, 'Cookie' became renowned as the Pistols' "peacemaker" – his words – capable of keeping a volatile team working in something like concert. But as recent events have underlined – in August, Cook and Jones won a High Court battle with singer John Lydon to allow the group's music to be used in Danny Boyle's upcoming Disney miniseries, *Pistol* – internal conflict has been more the rule than the exception.

This evening, Cook will play a show at the nearby Garage venue to promote *SNAFU*, the new album by The Professionals, the post-Pistols group he's revived in recent years. But for now, he's

ready to open up – with much saintly forbearance and comic burying-of-head-in-hands – about a drama-crammed life that's also included stints with '80s rock-rappers Chiefs Of Relief, Vic Godard and Edwyn Collins, and being father to pop singer Hollie Cook. He'll even, unexpectedly, reveal a late-era Charlie Watts-style dalliance with the dark stuff.

"John, Glen and Steve have all done their books, so it's good to remind people there was also a drummer in the Sex Pistols," he ➤

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Edwyn Collins pays homage to a "loyal friend".



"Paul doesn't chatter. He means everything he says and he never lies. He is deadly funny but he never fakes jollity. He is a loyal friend. I knew Paul's dad, Tom, and you knew that

Paul had a very good Hammersmith upbringing. The Cooks – Paul, Jeni and Hollie – are all out of the top drawer."

◀ smiles. "I've never really told my side of the story..."

Starting with recent events: how important was your winning the High Court case against John Lydon?

I thought it was time to stand up for ourselves and stop being bullied, basically. We signed an agreement a long time ago that "the majority rules", and it's important to me that people adhere to that agreement and not just tear it up when it suits them. So, sadly, it ended up in a horrible Ikea-style court room, being grilled by some toff in a wig. I'm glad we won, and I hope we can move on and build bridges with John in the future. I was a bit pissed off that Steve didn't man up and come over [from LA, for the hearing] but Steve and I will always make up. As you know, we go back a long way.

I read an interview where you said that until you read his book, *Lonely Boy*, you hadn't realised the extent of the sexual abuse Steve suffered at home, or the depths of his drug addiction.

Me and Steve have always had this brotherly relationship... But... it was a weird one. He never opened up to me about all that, even later on, though I knew it was happening. He really was 'a lonely boy', he kept himself to himself. We talked about it a bit more as we got older. But the book was like *(covers eyes)*, "No more, no more!" and then on the next page it gets even worse.

Was yours, in contrast, a happy childhood?

Yeah, I think me – and Glen [Matlock] – had quite stable backgrounds. It was a solid working-class family. Dad was a carpenter/joiner, mum was a housewife. And I always had a great love for music and fashion from a young age.

Did that come from your parents?

No, not at all. They were really old-school. It came from my older sister and her boyfriend,

really. I was really into the early ska stuff, soul music, Motown. There was a big West Indian community in our area. Then I graduated via the older kids down the block to The Kinks, The Who, Hendrix. We were lucky that we had the Hammersmith Odeon down the road. All the Motown bands came over to play. The Four Tops, Stevie Wonder, The Temptations, they were the first people I saw.

Did you fantasise about being famous as a kid?

Not until we sat down with Wally [Nightingale, proto-Pistols guitarist in 1972/73] and decided to form a band. After that, it was, "This is what I want..." Before that it was football. I was quite good – even if I say so myself.

It feeds into Pistols mythology that the group began life with all this gear stolen from Ronnie Wood, Rod Stewart, David Bowie. Did you feel empowered by that?

"...Comes out better on a stolen guitar", as Ziggy said. It was done out of necessity. Steve was the Dickensian street kid, a burglar. He's not proud of it these days. I was the straight-goer with the regular job. While I was at work at the brewery, he'd be out nicking stuff...

Were you an accomplice?

Not so much. But he did lead me astray a few times. When we stole a van full of gear? Yes, the police came knocking on the door at five o'clock in the morning... it was a crazy time. Steve was staying with us, because he didn't want to go home, because of the situation there. My parents put up with it, God bless 'em.

Your mum was interviewed for Fred and Judy Vermorel's 1978 book, *Sex Pistols*. She came across as very supportive of the band.

She was. During the punks v Teds time, I remember her chasing some Teds down the road when they'd given me a dirty look. Screaming and shouting at them!

You began frequenting Malcolm McLaren's shop – then Let It Rock, later Sex – on the King's Road. What was the allure of a place like that to you and Steve?

Malcolm was selling all the rock'n'roll stuff, which was interesting. Everywhere else was still selling platform boots and flares. Malcolm and Vivienne [Westwood] would let us hang out there – they were interested in where we came from, what we were doing. We thought we'd arrived, these kids from Hammersmith hanging out in Chelsea. Then it turned out the guy who worked in the shop on Saturdays [Glen Matlock] played bass... Looking back, the stars were so aligned. But we had to get rid of poor Wally. He was one of these pain-in-the-arse guitarists. Then, hey presto, John started coming into the shop.

Were tensions immediately evident between him and Glen and Steve?

It was fine to start with. We had a good unit, someone from a trendy King's Road shop wanted to manage us, what could possibly go wrong? John always had an edge, but that was what was great about him. If he wanted to say something, he would. But, yeah, there were tensions. I don't think Steve was very enamoured with him from the start. But I used to get on with him well, we'd go out for a drink together and so on.

Were you surprised the Pistols took off so quickly? You'd only had Rotten in the ranks for a year or so before you signed to EMI...

It was beyond our wildest dreams. But we understood where we came from. We were totally in touch with what the kids wanted. People think we came along and, y'know, "They were lucky!" but we were all very grounded in our subcultures and heritage. We knew we could shake things up a bit. I still don't think we get enough credit for that. People still think Malcolm put us together and told us what to do. It's total bullshit.

A LIFE IN PICTURES

2

The Cook report: a Pistol's shots.

1 Blond ambition: "I always had a great love for music from a young age." Paul's first school photograph, aged six.

2 With Steve Jones (left) in proto-Pistols band The Strand, circa 1974.

3 "We were totally in touch with what the kids wanted": the Sex Pistols, 1976, (from left) Glen Matlock, Johnny Rotten, Steve Jones, Cook.

4 On the dotted... the band (with manager Malcolm McLaren, far right) sign their A&M record deal outside Buckingham Palace, March 10, 1977. Moments earlier Cook had a fight with Sid Vicious (third right) in the limo taking them there. "That was funny," remembers Paul.

5 "Beer, anyone?": the re-formed Sex Pistols announce the Filthy Lucre Tour at London's 100 Club, March 18, 1996.

6 Touring the world with "tough cookie" Edwyn Collins (second right), 1995.

7 He bangs the drums: Cook leads The Professionals from the back, October 2021.

8 We are family: (from left) Jeni, Hollie and Paul Cook in 2012.

9 Cook in September 1976: "We knew we could shake things up a bit."



Courtesy of Paul Cook (3), Barry Plummer, Shutterstock (2), Andrew Cotterill, Getty, Camera Press/Hellermann



You became infamous overnight in December 1976 after the Bill Grundy interview. Was it strange waking up to find yourself front-page news?

Yes, the world was very different after that. Maybe for the worse. We were still developing as a band. Think about it now – being 20-year-old kids, trying to make music and get on in a band. OK, you've got an attitude and think you're the bollocks, but to wake up to that... How do you deal with it? We managed to for a while. But it was bloody stressful a lot of the time. We just wanted to make music and people wanted to kill us!

Around the time of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations in June 1977, when the Pistols released *God Save The Queen*, you were attacked with a metal bar.

I was with my girlfriend. These Teds came up – I can remember the exact words – "What you wearing our fucking shoes for?" I had a pair of brothel creepers on. I was like, "What's it to you? Blah blah..." They went off, then came back with a metal bar. Bish-bosh-bash! Four of them. With all the street parties and bunting, people must have thought we were fucking mad releasing that song. We didn't realise how shocking it was at the time. It's only now, when I reflect on it today, in my quieter moments... But we all got through it – except poor Sid, of course.

What did you make of Sid Vicious joining the band?

I liked him. John was falling out with Glen at the time, I'm not sure why, because he went to grammar school or something (*raises an ironic eyebrow*). Me and Steve were stuck in the middle. We came back from holiday [in February 1977] and it was like, "Sid's joining the band." Oh god (*puts head in hands*). He couldn't play a note, Steve had to teach him. We didn't get on straight away, I must admit. He came in with completely the wrong attitude, totally

over-the-top. As if things weren't chaotic enough at the time...

You had a fight with him in the back of the limo on the way to signing with A&M outside Buckingham Palace...

Yes, as you do (*laughs*). That was funny, everyone falling out of the car with black eyes and aching arms. But when we played the Swedish tour [in July 1977] I bonded with him. We got on all right after that. John wanted to

“People still think Malcolm put us together and told us what to do. It's total bullshit.”

get Sid in as his soul partner, as he was feeling a bit lonely, as me and Steve were mates. But almost as soon as he joined, John fell out with him. I thought (*sighs*), "Fucking great..."

Did Vicious's arrival ruin the band?

It was the pinnacle of the Pistols for me, actually. The early gigs we did with Sid, we looked great, we sounded great... To begin with, Sid really wanted to make it work.

How aware were you of his involvement with heroin?

To tell the truth, I was oblivious to how bad that New York scene was. We were only close for a couple of years but Sid was an intelligent guy. People think he was a dumb-arse punk, but he just played on that. It was his act. He was right on the button, he knew what was going on. [His death] was shocking more than anything.

And out of all this chaos came *Never Mind The Bollocks... Here's The Sex Pistols*. How did that happen?

Natural energy? I dunno. Steve and Glen were good songwriters, John wrote great lyrics. We were running on a natural high.

Your drumming on that record is widely admired. [Veteran *Bollocks* engineer/producer] Bill Price said it was one of the best rhythm sections he'd ever recorded.

Were you aware of your talent?

No (*laughs*). I'd be the first to say I'm not technically a good drummer. But what I do, I do well. What I did fitted in with what we did. I locked in with Steve, that driving energy, there weren't too many frills. We didn't have time to learn any. No sooner had we learned to play, we were off.

You've said you really liked Lydon's post-Pistols work, PiL's *Metal Box* particularly. Did you think the Pistols could have developed musically?

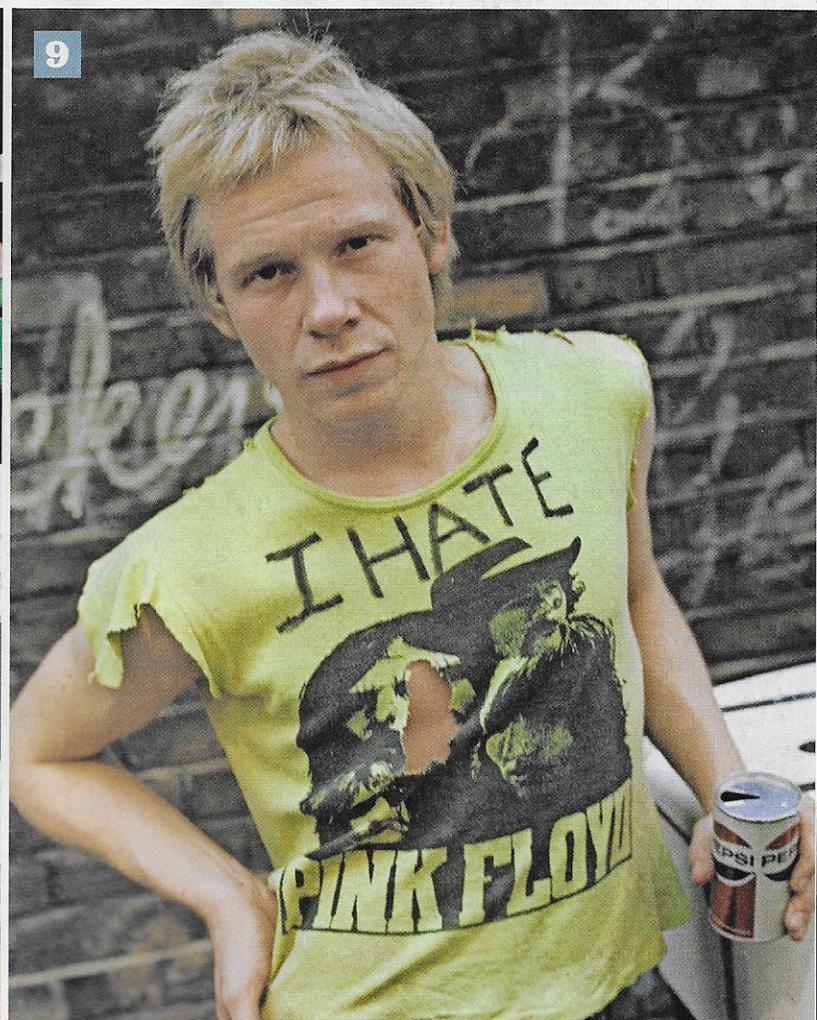
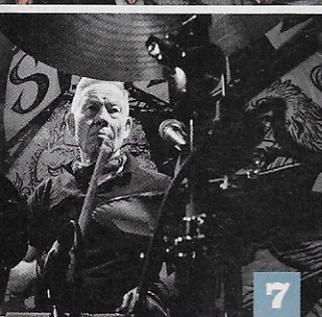
Yes, without a doubt. One of my greatest regrets is we didn't make a second album. I think it would have gone in a darker direction, maybe where John was heading. People were saying, "Glen's gone, you've lost your songwriter," but Steve was developing as a songwriter. I liked the direction we were going with *Holidays In The Sun*, *Bodies* and so on.

The split must have been confusing. To simply fizzle out after the US tour in 1978...

(*Deep sigh*) I was glad. We'd all had enough by then. The pressure was incredible. Touring with ex-Vietnam bodyguards, the cops checking on us everywhere, Sid nearly dying from an overdose... it was horrible, actually. I can't even remember what happened afterwards.

You and Steve flew to Rio and recorded with the train robber, Ronnie Biggs...

I remember thinking at the time, "We all



“need a break, then we can reconvene down the pub and sort it out.” But it didn’t happen like that. I know John thinks we left him on his own [in America] but we just needed to get out of there. So we went to Rio – another one of Malcolm’s mad ideas for the film [The Great Rock’n’Roll Swindle]. John felt bitter... but there’s never a good way to end shit like that.

Did you enjoy Biggs’s company?

He was all right, a bit like us. Well, he wasn’t, he was a south London petty criminal who by chance ended up being part of the Great Train Robbery. Doing that stuff with Ronnie Biggs wasn’t one of the more tasteful things we did. I don’t look back on The Great Rock’n’Roll Swindle and think, “What a great artistic work!” I know John hates it. Some people like it. I suppose it was funny – up to a point.

Was there a plan after the Pistols ended? The Professionals were up and running fairly quickly.

To be honest, we were lost, we didn’t know what the fuck to do. We ended up getting involved in this Hollywood film, Ladies And Gentlemen, The Fabulous Stains. We went to Canada [in March 1980] to film it with Paul Simonon and Ray Winstone [as on-screen bandmates in ‘The Looters’]. We wrote the song Join The Professionals, which gave us a name for a new band. Steve didn’t want to sing – I mean, how could you top Johnny Rotten as a singer? – but he ended up doing it anyway. We got an album together [November 1981’s *I Didn’t See It Coming*], but Steve was getting pretty fucked up by then. I thought, “Oh god, here we go again...” The production was crap, but they were good songs.

The Professionals were involved in a bad car crash in Minneapolis the week *I Didn’t See It Coming* was released. Did you feel your life as a musician was doomed to bad luck?

Well, if [Steve’s] drug thing wasn’t bad enough... (Pause) I remember waking up in the hospital screaming my head off. I’ve seen pictures of the crash, it’s horrific – how we walked out of that alive, I don’t know. The other driver, who was drunk, was killed. I was in the front, without a seatbelt on. I was lucky – Paul [Myers, bass] and Ray [McVeigh, guitar] shouted out from the back seat and I turned round, so the back of my head, not the front, hit the dashboard. I was pretty mangled up for six months. We managed to get back to the States to finish the tour and – surprise, surprise – that fucked up. We were at the airport waiting to go home and Steve didn’t turn up. He’s still there now (laughs).

After the Pistols, did you have enough money not to work?

(Laughs) No, not at all! We had nothing. Luckily we had an album that was iconic and still selling. So we had an asset, and, dare I say it, a brand as well.

Did you realise instantly how momentous *Bollocks* was?

No, not until 10 or 15 years afterwards. People forget that [the industry] was keen to sweep away punk, as there were all these lovely new wave and New Romantic bands coming along, who didn’t cause no trouble. All your Spandaus and Duran Durans. No one talked about *Never Mind The Bollocks*... much. It was only on its tenth or 15th anniversary people started saying, “Looking back, it was quite important, culturally and artistically, all this punk stuff.”

The Pistols’ finances were finally sorted out in 1986, when McLaren lost an action brought by Lydon in the High Court. Did that change your fortunes?

John managed to get the money going back to the band, but most of it had been eaten up by

lawyers’ costs. There was a bit left. But thank you, John, for doing that. He was the most sensible one at that time, while me and Steve were hiding our heads in the sand.

Your next group was Chiefs Of Relief, fronted by ex-Bow Wow Wow guitarist Matthew Ashman. Why team up with them?

I was lost again, and at a loose end. I was friends with Matthew Ashman, through the Malcolm connection, and I quite liked what they were doing, that rock-rap crossover. Their drummer Dave Barbe [aka David Barbarossa] had left, so Matthew asked me to join them. Matthew could write good songs but he was another fuck-up – I just attract them. A drugs thing? Yes, he was OK at first but it got worse as we went along. We made a good album, did a great tour with Big Audio Dynamite, but no one really wanted to know. They were more interested in Half Man Half Biscuit (laughs).

“I’m enjoying making music more than ever these days”: Paul Cook branches out, Islington, London, October 24, 2021.

“Every time the Pistols got back together it was getting worse. People’s attitudes, people’s relationships.”

COOKIE CUTS

Three volleys from a Pistol’s *batterie*, saluted by Pat Gilbert.

THE PUNK PINNACLE

Sex Pistols

★★★★★

Never Mind The Bollocks... Here’s The Sex Pistols

(VIRGIN, 1977)



Bollocks’ high-gloss sheen and aural clarity – courtesy of Wessex Studios producers Chris Thomas and Bill Price – accentuated everything that had made the Pistols so inspirational in the first place, including Cook’s drums, both juicily thuggish and intuitively sensitive to each track’s mood and gear-changes. Marvel at the bounce in *Pretty Vacant’s* tribal intro beat, *Bodies’* metronomic pummelling, *New York’s* crash-y, syncopated fills. The boy’s a natural.

THE INDIE TRIUMPH

Edwyn Collins

★★★★★

Gorgeous George

(SETANTA, 1994)



OK, *Gorgeous George’s* breakthrough smash *A Girl Like You* saw Cook playing along to a sample of Len Barry’s swinging Northern Soul staple 1-2-3, but

elsewhere the ex-Pistol showcased hitherto untested techniques – spatial Floyd-esque beats on *The Campaign For Real Rock*, jazzy rim-shots on the title track, a brisk country metre on *Make Me Feel Again*. Collins could boast a real-life Pistol in his holster and Cook a long-overdue shot at reinvention.

THE BALLSY BOUNCE-BACK

The Professionals

★★★★★

What In The World

(AUTOMATON, 2017)



Who knew Cookie could write a stirring chord-change or 10? This debut from the millennial resuscitation of the drummer’s post-Pistols unit featured Paul and new singer-guitarist Tom Spencer setting off an album’s worth of rock fireworks, with guests Steve Jones, Billy Duffy, Duff McKagan, Mick Jones *et al* dialling their amps to 11. No Pistols fan would feel short-changed by *Good Man Down*, *Going Gone* or *Take Me Down*.

You worked steadily in the early and mid-’90s with Vic Godard and Edwyn Collins. What was the attraction?

Vic is a great songwriter and I knew him from way back. Edwyn was producing Vic’s *End Of The Surrey People* album. I knew Orange Juice were pretty popular but I wasn’t really familiar with their music. But it was obvious to me Edwyn was a real talent. It was a great learning curve for me, actually, playing along to his mad songs and key changes. Edwyn was at a low ebb at that time – but then he wrote *A Girl Like You* and had enormous success with *Gorgeous George*.

Did you enjoy being back on the road?

Yeah, we toured the world. Edwyn was massive in places like Germany. I’m still close to him now. Of course, he had that terrible stroke [in 2005], which shows what a fighter he is. Everyone thought he was this effeminate indie type but he’s a tough cookie, very strong-minded. I’m in awe of his recovery.

Your daughter Hollie was growing up through this time...

Yes, I was dealing with all that. I was getting a little bit fucked-up – drugs – it’s not very well documented. But I was keeping myself to myself, but doing the family thing as well. Trying to keep things under control. But it never got too bad.

What kind of drugs?

Never you mind! (Laughs) Let’s just say a bit of everything. I realised I needed to rein it in a bit,



but I had my family around to help me hold it all together.

Against all expectations, the Sex Pistols reunited in 1996. As “the peacemaker”, did you help bring it all together?

I dunno how it came about. There were always rumblings. Steve and I have a great manager in LA, Anita Camarata, who had connections to John. I never, ever thought that John would be interested in a reunion but suddenly we heard he fancied doing it. “Really?! You sure?!” And I’m glad we did, it was a great tour.

Were you anxious about getting involved?

Oh totally! I thought, “We’re playing massive places here.” First time round we played small venues, we’d never played to more than a few thousand at the most. Now we were going to play to 30,000 people at Finsbury Park for the big comeback gig. But there were enough egos on that stage to fill Wembley Stadium 10 times over. Finsbury Park was one of my favourite-ever Pistols gigs. It was brilliant.

Do you think you could have made a new album and continued full-time?

Everyone was getting on OK when we started, but as it went along it soon all fell apart personality-wise. A lot of the old resentments came up. Steve was very uptight about his relationship with John. I turned up having been on tour with Edwyn, and having had such a laugh, and then here’s the Pistols with this

sense-of-humour bypass. We saw that out for a year but we couldn’t wait for it to end.

There were subsequent get-togethers, including the Pistols At The Palace in 2002, the 2008 tour...

I noticed every time we got back together it was getting worse. People’s attitudes, people’s relationships. What’s the point if you aren’t going to have a bit of fun? It was a poisonous atmosphere. It’s never going to happen again.

So no amount of money would bring you all back together?

(Comedic squint) Why, are you making us an offer? No, it won’t happen. Seventy-year-old Sex Pistols singing about anarchy? Not a pretty sight.

Your daughter Hollie’s career took off in 2014. What advice did you give her about going into the business?

Well... I didn’t push her into it at all. She went to a music/arts school and has always been a good singer. Her mum [Cook’s wife Jeni] used to sing backing vocals with Culture Club. She grew up with [Boy] George. Hollie was quite a shy little girl, then she bailed out of music school and toured with The Slits. Ari [Up] was great with her, she really brought her out of herself. She’s just finished her fourth album – I’m very proud of her.

Since 2016, The Professionals have been back together full-time, though you’re now the only original member. Why revive them?

Ray and Paul were always around. Ray was always the instigator when it came to doing anything. Steve was never going to get involved, he wouldn’t ever leave LA. We were in the studio one day and [present singer/guitarist] Tom Spencer was there with The Men They Couldn’t Hang. He joined in and it sounded good. We did a gig at the 100 Club and it went from there.

2017’s *What In The World* and the new album, *SNAFU*, have been well-received. Who are the principal songwriters?

Me and Tom. I play guitar well enough to write songs. People don’t realise I co-wrote the majority of *I Didn’t See It Coming*, as Steve was totally out to lunch at the time and I had to take control of it. We fell out with Ray so I asked favours from other guitarists all over the place – Jonesy, Mick Jones, Billy Duffy, Phil Collen. Tom’s a force of nature with a fertile mind when it comes to lyrics. He’s got too much going on, I have to rein him in sometimes.

***SNAFU* – that could be the title of any number of records or projects you’ve been involved in...**

Yes, that could be the title of my life story – Situation Normal: All Fucked Up (laughs). But I’ve had a great time making music and, to be honest, I’m enjoying it more than ever these days. It’s a good place to be in. M

The Professionals’ SNAFU is out now on the JTP label/ theprofessionalsband.com



THE PROFESSIONALS SNAFU

(JTP Records)

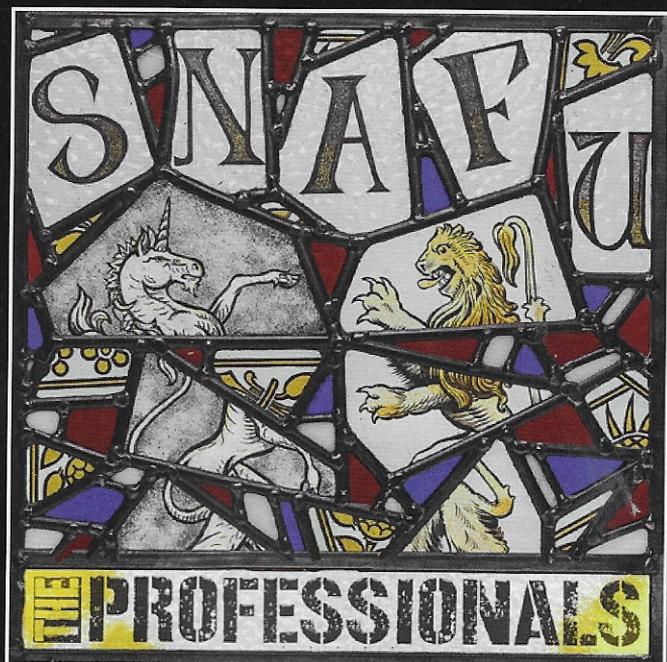
Hats off to the magnificent.

9/10

The Professionals, circa 2021, have vigorously kicked on from where their 2017 *Vive Le Rock* album of the year 'What In The World' left off. 'SNAFU' (Situation Normal All Fucked Up) is another Cook and Spencer masterclass in post-punk meets new wave, flat out rock 'n' roll. 'SNAFU' also features some very, very impressive guests. However, it's the albums astute songcraft and infectious sing-along-ability that smashes the Pro's ball sky-high over the nostalgia fence. Steve Jones absence is barely felt, as a host of legendary axemen help fill the neurotic outsider's firmly stuck in LA sneakers. Billy Duffy, Phil Cohen, Jonny Weathers join former bandmate Chris McCormack in lending a riff or ten to this victorious release. Toshi is now the full-time bassist, while Paul Myers remains a band member. Opener 'Easily Led' has The Professionals distinctive shoulder moving resonance while Paul Cook's timing continues to have enormous yet understated power that can (and will) invoke some serious air drumming. Tom Spencer's knack for writing intelligent and catchy lyrics shines through the punk church's stained glass window while at the same time, his tuneful rasp has a more measured finesse that flawlessly binds each track (and, subsequently the album) together. Add in Dave Draper's discerning touch, taste, and feel and boy, it's on. The early eighties Professionals sound is dug up, dusted off, and dropkicked into 2021 on a deliciously chugging 'Gold And Truthful' before a celebratory snap crackle and pop 'Spike Me Baby', which sees Holly Cook add some perfectly placed backing vocals. The searing riffs continue on the speedy 'Punk Rock, And A Hard Place' before the album's standout cut creeps up and coshes you over the emotional memory bank. 'M'Ashes' is an unbridled albeit heartbreaking joy. The true story of Paul Cook delivering Steve Jones's Mum's ashes to him in Los Angeles is so deftly told (in three parts) that it still induces goosebumps after a dozen listens. 'Heartburn' marches to pub rock rockabilly beat while a bizarrely prophetic 'Never Say Never' dances in the argumentative ashes of bands past. A disbelieving 'The Elegant Art (Of Falling Apart)' sticks a diamond-dusted knife into the temple of copycat artists masquerading

as geniuses, whereas 'Only Human' is a straight-up modern punk blaster. The album's final offering is the slower-paced 'Consuminator'. Tom Spencer's deeply personal tribute to Stefan Cush is an exquisite, touching and worthy way to complete 'SNAFU'. The Professionals, it seems, have done it again...Album of the year, it's as simple as that.

Guy Shankland



REVIEW

Edited by GARRY BUSHELL

NEVER MIND THE PISTOLS... I'M THE DRUMMER

The original
punk Paul
Cook tells
**Garry
Bushell** why
he'll never
quit making
music

'You have to be cool when playing with mad people'

NO FUTURE
Paul drums with Sex Pistols Sid Vicious, Johnny Rotten and Steve Jones



HE WAS part of a musical revolution, the punk rock explosion that horrified polite society in the 1970s. But these days Paul Cook of the notorious Sex Pistols likes nothing better than...a nice educational trip to a museum. "I'm a bit of a culture vulture," Paul, 65, tells me with a grin. "Museums, art galleries, the cinema...I love all that. That's how I relax now, I go out and about."

The down-to-earth drummer with The Professionals is also a regular at Stamford Bridge. He has supported Chelsea FC since childhood. "Just when you think you're out of it, they drag you back in..." he shrugs.

Cook – Cookie to his friends – gets recognised a lot on the terraces. "Generally, people are all right. They want to talk about the Sex Pistols days. They say that we were an influence on their lives, which is what we set out to be – we wanted to widen people's horizons, let them see they could do other things."

Punk didn't just kick open doors in the music business, he adds, "it influenced fashion, writing, art, film...it was right across the board. The message was, if you want to do something, do it, get up and have a go. Don't just accept a dead-end job or whatever. That struck a chord for a generation."

Paul isn't keen to dwell on the past, preferring to talk about the Professionals – the band he first formed with Pistols guitarist Steve Jones in 1980, and who have just released SNAFU, their third official album in 41 years.

"People ask, 'What have you been doing since the Sex Pistols?'," he says. "I say, 'How long have you got?'" He has a point. With Jones, Paul played with Phil Lynott in the Greedy B*****s, Johnny Thunders and Joan Jett. He was in the Bow Wow Wow spin-off Chiefs Of Relief, he's toured for years with Orange Juice's Edwyn Collins and collaborated with Def Leppard guitarist Phil Collen in Man-Raze.

Cookie also discovered Bananarama and co-produced their debut album.

He's reluctant to talk about the recent court case which saw him and Jones see off ex-Pistols frontman John Lydon. The former Mr Rotten was out to stop Danny Boyle using their music on the upcoming Netflix series Pistol – based on Steve's memoir, Lonely Boy: Tales From A Sex Pistol. But the band had agreed a majority rule clause on decisions affecting their music, and Lydon lost.

"I don't want to get into a war of words," says Paul. "It was sad we had to go to court, and a bit of a s*** show, but a decision has been made – accept it and move on."

Hammersmith-born Paul was always the solid backbone of the Pistols, the stable one. The second child of three, Cookie's father was a carpenter and joiner; his mother did casual work. Soul and 1960s ska were his first loves, followed by glam rock and hard rock in his teens.

Paul grew up just around the corner from Jones; both attended Christopher Wren school near White City, acknowledged as rough even by the standard of

West London comprehensives. Cook was an apprentice electrician when they formed their first band, The Strand, with neighbour Warwick "Wally" Nightingale – a budding guitarist and then the only one of them who could play.

The genesis of the Sex Pistols, via Malcolm McLaren's King's Road boutique, and Jones's kleptomaniac, has been told many times. Steve stole Paul's first drumkit from the BBC, two guitars from Rod Stewart's Windsor home and a whole PA from David Bowie at Hammersmith Odeon (plus a fur coat from Ronnie Wood's house and Keith Richards's TV).

Formed in 1975, the Pistols went up like a rocket and conked out in January 1978. Their incredible story of, in Paul's words "shaking things up and getting up a lot of noses", includes their double platinum selling debut album, seven Top Ten singles – one being the banned 1977 smash God Save The Queen – and the death of Sid Vicious. They influenced everyone from Nirvana to Green Day.

Yet Paul insists, "I was happiest when the Pistols split. That was a relief the first time around, and it was a relief the second time around too (in 1996)...after all that, I wanted a bit of downtime; to forget the music business and just chill out."

ANOTHER reunion is unlikely. Steve and John weren't talking even before the court case – despite both living near Venice Beach, Los Angeles. "I can't see it happening again," says Paul who was always the go-between. "I don't think anybody wants it to. It'd look ridiculous, four 65-year-old blokes singing about anarchy."

Paul still lives in Hammersmith, not far from the house he grew up in, with wife Jeni, a former backing singer for Culture Club. "We've been together for 35 years," he says. "We met on the club scene." Boy George is godfather to their daughter Hollie, a well-respected singer in her own right – she sings on Spike Me Baby, a track on his new album inspired by the time Paul unwittingly helped himself to her "herbally enhanced" chocolates.

He laughs when I remind him that Hollie called him "the coolest Sex Pistol".

"Well, who's the coolest Beatle? Ringo! In the Stones it was Charlie. You have to be cool when you're playing with mad people at the front."

He still enjoys "drinking with my mates down the pub, chinking the fat, telling stories, having a giggle", but not to excess. "I'm pretty stable," he says. "We grow up, don't we? I'm not a typical muso."

Unlike Jeni, a vegetarian and raw food advocate, he eats everything. "But I try to eat healthy; not too much junk. And I exercise. I keep in shape. Before a tour I go down the gym."

"With the Professionals, our music is pretty full-on. It don't get any easier in your 60s, you just adapt, temper your style."

His own drumming heroes include The Faces' Kenney Jones, Booker T legend Al Jackson and



EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS

BOOK OFFERS



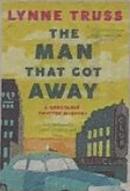
A SHOT IN THE DARK

CONSTABLE TWITTEN SERIES

BY LYNNE TRUSS PUBLISHED BY BLOOMSBURY

Brighton, 1957. Inspector Steine rather enjoys his life as a policeman by the sea. No criminals, no crime, no stress, but then a new constable shows up, Constable Twitten, and starts investigating a series of burglaries. A famous theatre critic is then shot dead part way through the opening night of a new play. It seems Brighton may be in need of a police force after all. Discover the first book in this charming murder mystery series set in the 1950s.

£8.99
PAPERBACK



THE MAN THAT GOT AWAY

CONSTABLE TWITTEN SERIES

BY LYNNE TRUSS PUBLISHED BY BLOOMSBURY

It's summer in Brighton, and a man dripping with blood is found in a deckchair. Constable Twitten has a hunch who may be responsible for the murder, but Inspector Steine is distracted as usual, and Sergeant Brunswick is just happy to potentially be going undercover. In the second instalment of this joyfully quirky crime series, our trio of detectives must investigate the murder of a hapless romantic; a con man on the prowl; and a dodgy Brighton nightspot...

£8.99
PAPERBACK



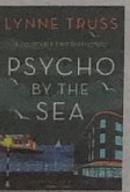
MURDER BY MILK BOTTLE

CONSTABLE TWITTEN SERIES

BY LYNNE TRUSS PUBLISHED BY BLOOMSBURY

1957. The August bank holiday is approaching and after two high-profile murder cases, Constable Twitten is hoping for a quiet spell. But his hoped-for rest is interrupted when three bodies are found, all murdered with the same unusual weapon: a milk bottle. Constable Twitten, Sergeant Brunswick, and Inspector Steine are baffled but also determined to solve the case and catch the killer. The third book in the dark and delightful seaside mystery series.

£8.99
PAPERBACK



PSYCHO BY THE SEA

CONSTABLE TWITTEN SERIES

BY LYNNE TRUSS PUBLISHED BY BLOOMSBURY

A local gang member has disappeared in the middle of planning a huge heist, a violent criminal obsessed with hunting policemen has escaped Broadmoor, and an American researcher has been found dead. The detectives must work out just who is behind these dastardly acts. Three redoubtable detectives. One dastardly criminal. Psycho by the Sea is the new murder mystery in the prize-winning Constable Twitten series.

£14.99
HARDBACK

To order any of these titles call
020 3176 3832

UK Delivery is £2.99 | UK Orders over £20 are FREE
Please note we no longer accept cheques or postal orders



PROFESSIONALS
Paul with Toshi 'JC' Ogawa and Tom Spencer



ANARCHY IN THE USA
Sex Pistol reunion in Hollywood in 1996 with Jones, Rotten, Cook and Glen Matlock

Roxy Music's Paul Thompson. "As I got older, I appreciated jazz drummers, appreciated the musicianship."

The Professionals new UK tour starts on Wednesday in support of their new album. Cook and Jones formed the band late in 1979, after a "disastrous" short-lived attempt to fuse the Pistols together with Sham 69. Their mix of huge guitar chords, swaggering rock and catchy anthems still punches home.

Jones isn't on the new album but Def Leppard's Phil Collen and The Cult's Billy Duffy guest. "People still ask me, 'Where's Jonesy?'," says Paul. "But this Professionals line-up has been together longer than the original line-up."

Steve did play on 2017's What In The World album. "I tried to get him on this one but because of Covid he couldn't get to the studio; but if we went to the States he'd definitely be on stage."

LYDON, Jones and original Pistols bassist Glen Matlock have written memoirs, but Paul laughs at the idea. "A Cook book! What, Anchovies In The UK? Squid Vicious? God Save The Cream? It has been suggested, but I don't see the point of raking over the past."

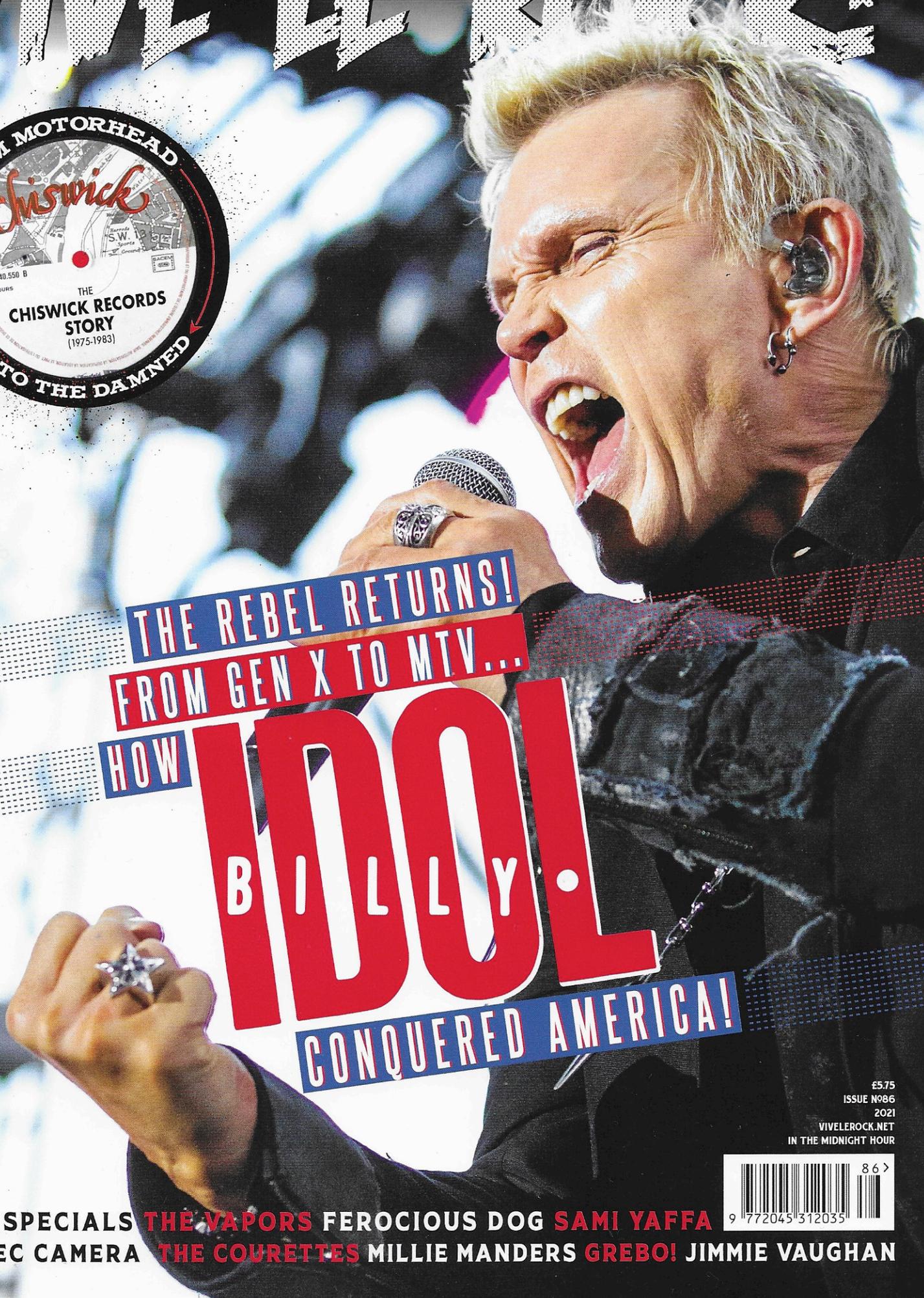
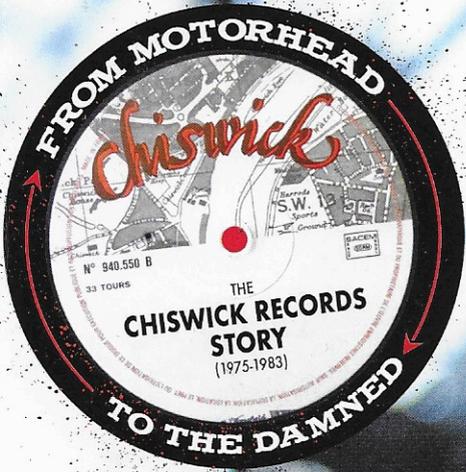
Future plans include a twice-postponed tour with Stiff Little Fingers next spring. And before that? "I wouldn't mind a nice holiday, go over to Los Angeles and see Steve - he's still one of the funniest guys I know. I've got lots of friends in LA."

"But the plan is to keep making music, writing new stuff and getting it out there. We're moving forward. We're progressing as a band, slowly..."

"I just try to keep on being creative and keep moving on."

● **SNAFU** by The Professionals is out now. For tour dates see theprofessionalsband.com

VIVE LE ROCK!



THE REBEL RETURNS!
 FROM GEN X TO MTV...

HOW **BILLY IDOL**

CONQUERED AMERICA!

£5.75
 ISSUE N°86
 2021
 VIVELEROCK.NET
 IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR



THE SPECIALS THE VAPORS FEROCIOUS DOG SAMI YAFFA
 AZTEC CAMERA THE COURETTES MILLIE MANDERS GREBO! JIMMIE VAUGHAN

VIVE LE ROCK!

CONTENTS

REGULAR

10. THE KNOWLEDGE: NEWS & VIEWS

The Cult and Alice Cooper team up, Vive Le Christmas and much, much more!

20. PROFILED: THE COURETTES

One of the standout bands of the year, VLR meets husband and wife duo The Courettes.

22. DOWN ON THE STREET: INTRODUCING...

Unto Others, The Violent Hearts and The Strays make their presence known.



28. ROCK IN PEACE: CHARLIE WATTS

Kris Needs pays tribute to the late great Rolling Stone sticksman.

30. STATE OF INDEPENDENTS: UK DECAY

VLR profiles the Independent Chart busters of UK Decay.



84. ROUGH GUIDE: AZTEC CAMERA

Duncan Seaman profiles the genius of Roddy Frame and company.

86. THE BUSINESS: REVIEWS

All the record reviews, reissues, books, films and gigs you need to know about.

107. HIGHWAY TO HELL: TOUR NEWS

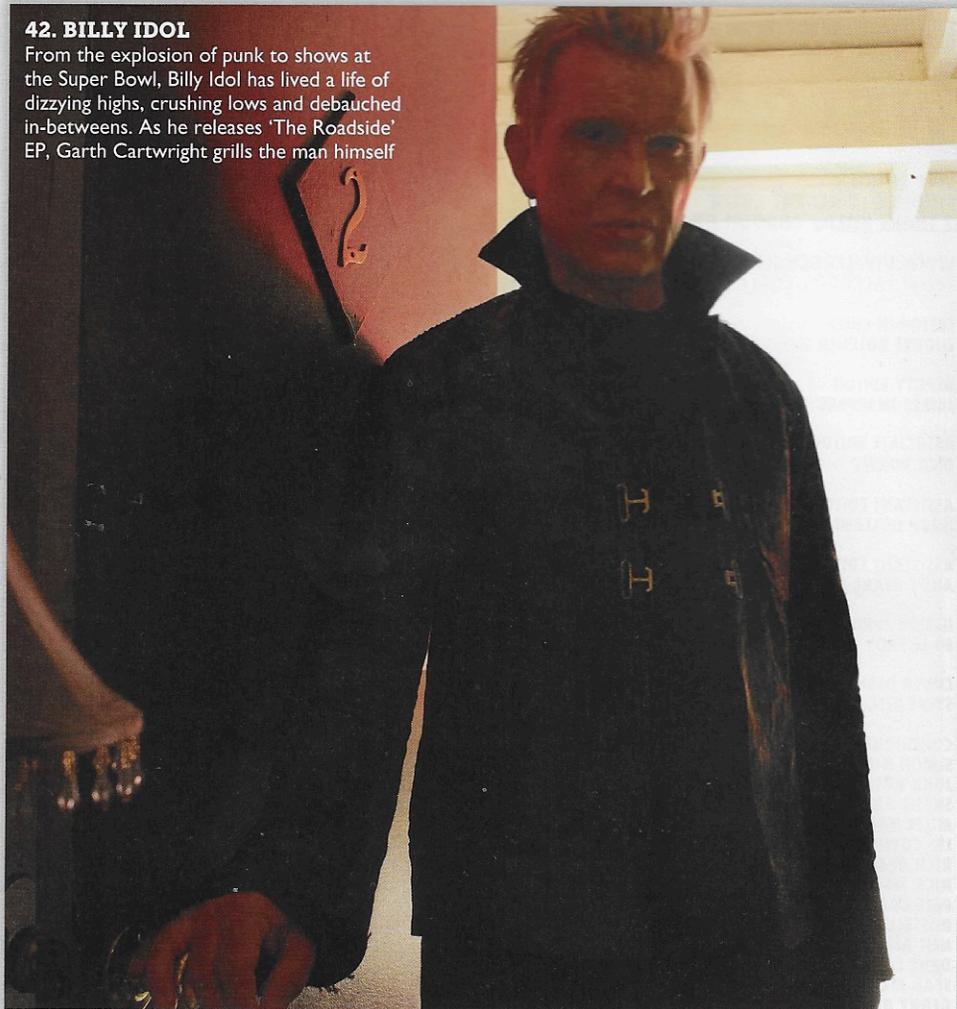
All the coming gigs for the months and years ahead.

114. WHO ARE YA?: VIVIEN GOLDMAN

VLR meets the punk professor to talk life lessons and recording with Youth.

42. BILLY IDOL

From the explosion of punk to shows at the Super Bowl, Billy Idol has lived a life of dizzying highs, crushing lows and debauched in-betweens. As he releases 'The Roadside' EP, Garth Cartwright grills the man himself



54. THE PROFESSIONALS

With the release of new album 'SNAFU' and their October tour, The Professionals are back at the peak of their powers. Guy Shankland hits the studio with the band...

33 REVOLUTIONS

This issue's key tracks



BILLY IDOL
RITA HAYWORTH
Billy is back and he's back on form! This cut from the 4 track 'Roadside' EP has a pounding backbeat and a big 'woah woah woah' chorus before Steve Stevens roars off into the sunset with a killer solo.



DAWN AFTER DARK
MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE
The late '80s Birmingham rockers are back after a long hiatus with a re-recording of their old single and it sounds huge! It all bodes well for their debut album coming this December on Chapter 22 Records.



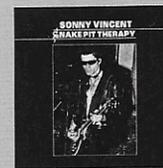
DEAD MEN WALKING
THE PRICE
Kirk Brandon is joined by the Ruts DC's Segs and Ruffy and Stiff Little Fingers' Jake Burns, to take on Spear Of Destiny's 'The Price'. Don't miss em' on tour in November.



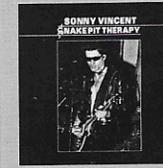
NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS
VORTEX
Previously unreleased, 'Vortex' makes its recorded debut on a new collection from the Bad Seeds in the form of 'B-Sides & Rarities (Part I & II)'. Intimate-sounding while powerfully packed full of emotion, there's not a bad song on here.



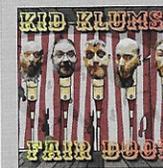
THE SPECIALS
GET UP, STAND UP
In a departure from their ska and 2 Tone roots the Coventry legends have returned with an album of protest cover songs, and this ultimate Bob Marley protest anthem fits the Specials perfectly.



SONNY VINCENT
THE END OF LIGHT
Mr Sonny Vincent is back, rawer, stronger and realer than ever. This track lights the fuse of the Stooges and Radio Birdman and is a great taster for his excellent new album 'Snake Pit Therapy' on Svart Records.



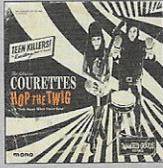
ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN
VILLIERS TERRACE
The Bunnymen are back with a wealth of early album reissues and a tour next year. And what better reminder of the power of the band than this track from their 'Crocodiles' debut. A post punk classic that shimmers and broods, this is timeless.



KID KLUMSY
FAIR DOOZ
They're wacky, and you can't quite pigeonhole them, but with new album 'Fair Dooz' these kids are anything but clumsy. SFW could almost be a quirky '80s American new wave track, as it states 'This is my song' over and over again until it does indeed get stuck-inside your head! Catch them on tour soon because these guys are a catchy blast of fresh air!



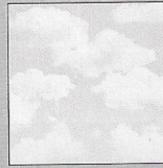
SHIHAD
TEAR DOWN THOSE NAMES
The New Zealand rockers are back with another hard hitting statement of intent. This groove filled cut builds and builds into a massive dancefloor filler. Tear 'em down!



THE COURETTES
HOP THE TWIG
This Danish and Brazilian 2 piece could just be our favourite new band and this Cramps twangin' rocker has hit written all over. Taken from their brand new Damaged Goods album 'Back In Mono', 'Hop The Twig' gives vintage rock 'n' roll a good kickin' into next Tuesday. Garage rock groovy!



THE GROUNDHOGS
CHERRY RED (LIVE)
A ramming speed riot of a song, the Hogs' classic from the seminal 'Split' LP gets a new lease of life on the new 'Road Hogs: Live From Richmond To Pocono' set. Flick to the reviews section now for Alvin Gibbs' take on it!



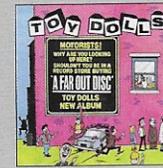
TURNSTILE
MYSTERY
Doing their best to flip the hardcore scene on its head, Turnstile's new album 'Glow On' is packed full of new ideas and audio wizardry. 'Mystery' is a fizzing slice of dirty, guitar driven pop that'll be stuck in your head for days.



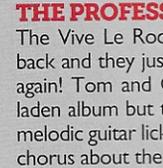
FACE TO FACE
BLANKED OUT
Managing the neat trick of writing punchy pop punk with an air of sadness to it, Face To Face are back in the game with new album 'No Way Out But Through'. It's a mighty fine body of work.



NAKED RAYGUN
GO THE SPOILS
A super-quick and super-deadly blast of sound that clocks in at just under a minute but managed to say everything it wants to. 'Over The Overlords' is the album Naked Raygun have been threatening for years.



TOY DOLLS
FLORENCE IS DEAF
Shout out to the folks at Cherry Red! They've put together a stonking great set of Toy Dolls albums that runs from 1989 to 1993. Head to the reviews section in this issue to see what we made of it.



THE PROFESSIONALS
NEVER SAY NEVER
The Vive Le Rock Album Of The Year winners are back and they just might have backed another winner again! Tom and Cookie have written another hook-laden album but this track is a little different. A lovely melodic guitar lick drives the song along on a sing along chorus about the Pistols possibility of reforming.

LOST CLASSIC

Vive Le Rock unearths forgotten magic tracks

ARTIST: JAWBREAKER
TRACK: WANT
YEAR: 1990

Arguably responsible (for better or worse depending on your opinion) for the later wave of American pop punk, Jawbreaker exploded into hearts and minds with their debut album 'Unfun' in 1990, the opening salvo of which was 'Want'. Gritty yet melodic, punchy yet melancholic, it deserves a spin to this day.



TOP 5: THROBBLEHEADS

Punk merch with a twist!

DESCENDENTS

MILO
Riffing on the 'Everything Sucks' cover, this wobble-headed figure sees Milo on the throne, proving that band merch has definitely not gone down the toilet.



FEAR

LEE VING
Have another beer with Fear! Featuring the legendary Lee Ving with knackered leather jacket and patches, he might be seven inches tall but he still rules.



DEVO

BOB 2
Are we not men? Well, no, in the case of the Bob Casale figure, it's more poly resin. Based on the 'Duty Now For The Future' era, it's limited to 1,000 hand numbered figures.



BAD BRAINS

H.R.
Now only available for order via back order (to give you an idea of how popular they are), the DC hardcore icon is all about the PMA here.



CIRCLE JERKS

SKANK MAN
Get Wild In The Streets! The Circle Jerks' limited edition Skank Man captures that classic pose perfectly and is available via back order.



For all Throbbles order online at Aggronautix.com

THE PROFESSIONALS



TALKING CARB

With the release of new album 'SNAFU' and their October tour, **THE PROFESSIONALS** are back at the peak of their powers. Guy Shankland hit the studio with Paul Cook and Tom Spencer for the first listen of the new record and a warts 'n' all conversation...

THE Professionals' original reformation back in 2015 raised more than a few curious and quizzical eyebrows. Firstly there was no Steve Jones, but the other three original members Paul Cook, Ray McVeigh and Paul Myers, were all on board with Tom Spencer taking over Jones's front and centre duties. A blistering and sold out comeback show at London's famous 100 Club was played to promote a three-CD 35th anniversary Professionals box set, 'The Complete Professionals'. Shortly after the 100 Club gig and buoyed by the reaction, a decision was made by all concerned to carry on with the band. Ray's involvement was a brief one, and after he departed, Chris McCormack was drafted in while Paul Myers' health meant he was sporadically in and out of the line-up. This remains the case today with Toshi now the permanent bassist, but Paul Myers is still very much a Professional. In 2017 the new line-up headed into the studio and recorded the 9/10 rated Vibe Le Rock Album Of The Year 'What In The World'. It was a jaw-dropping and cheek slapping Professionals resurrection. Tours, festivals and three E.P's followed before the pandemic ground the (music) world to a shuddering halt. Now in a steadily improving 2021, The Professionals are back to kick down some more doors with a brand new album, the blindsidingly impressive 'SNAFU'. Like its predecessor 'What In The World', the 'SNAFU' album includes a host of guest appearances, including Billy Duffy, Phil Cohen, Chris McCormack (who is now no longer a band member), Holly Cook and Jonny Weathers, to name but a few. The special guests' musical absorption into the record compliments the Professionals distinctive resonance without flooding it or flipping it towards

a supergroup. 'SNAFU' is a one hundred percent bonafide Professionals album. To promote the said release, the band will head off on a full UK tour in October with Desperate Measures supplying the support before then heading out with Stiff Little Fingers as special guests for their third time lucky March 2022 tour.

Vibe Le Rock sat down with Messers Cook and Spencer at their secret West London hideaway to get the first-ever listen to the hot off the press masters of 'SNAFU'. In our exclusive interview, the affable pair gives VLR a track by track guide to the latest Professionals offering, plus line-up news, future plans, space cakes, Steve Jones, secret shows, the impact of Covid, punk in 2021 and yes, the Sex Pistols.

Firstly can you confirm the Professionals line-up because there's been quite a few comings and goings?

Tom Spencer: "It's going to have to be a moveable... It's a hard way to start the interview. We've got Chris Catalyst, who did our August dates (on guitar), but he can't do October, so we don't know who'll be playing then. Hopefully, when this comes out, we'll be able to confirm the line-up for October, but we can't confirm a definite for that yet."

Paul Cook: "We are looking for a permanent replacement, but we've got to audition. We've tried a couple of guys, but we're not sure yet. Hopefully, we'll have a permanent one in for October; if not, we'll get someone to stand in again; it's the ever-evolving and changing line-up of The Professionals. Toshi is the full-time bassist now, although Paul Myers is in the latest video because they are both Professionals. We just had some fun (in the video) and swapped instruments around."

Tom: "The Chris (McCormack) breakdown happened during the making of this album. With a little bit of distance between it... it really does feel



OF BUSINESS



like Covid had an effect. He couldn't come to the studio with us because he has a high-risk daughter, and it alienated him to be doing his stuff from home and sending it in. We initially did it (the album) in two sessions in Wales, five tracks the first time, sent those to Chris for guitars, and we knew we then had a gap so we could put together the next six songs, and we started to try and write with Chris virtually and it didn't work. He wouldn't enter our way of writing, and it caused...(trails off). In the meantime, he had plenty of time to start developing what he says is a solo album, so...(deep sigh). As it broke down, he said it isn't working, so he kind of agreed to leave the process."

Paul: "All amicable, yeah I mean we're still really good friends. We just thought it was best to part ways and get on with it like we've done before with me and Tom doing the bulk of the work and Toshi doing the bass and guest guitarists again, which Chris is one of."

Tom: "He's still on the album. When we did the first five tracks, they weren't complete, but they were built on and then we did the next six and worked on all eleven. Subsequently, by the time we worked on the whole thing, Chris wasn't in it, so it was a case of changing some of his guitars, keeping some in place and bringing in guests. The usual ones, we tried to get Steve Jones (more on Steve later) on it, absolutely impossible. We got Billy Duffy and Phil Cohen plus some mates, guitarist Jonny Weathers, just trying to build it up with that second personality on each track."

Paul: That was the main problem really: we had so many guitars on the album plus lockdown, stop-start, studio here studio there, writing here then there, it was a bit of a number."

So before we settle back and listen to the album, can you tell us what

'SNAFU' means?

Paul: "Situation normal, all fucked up, which sums everything that's going on at the moment, not the band just generally..."

Tom: "There was a time it was the band, we had it as a working title, but it seemed to sum it all up. But it's Covid, and before that Brexit, situation normal, all fucked up."

At the time of printing, former Loyalties, Yo Yo's, Ginger Wildheart, Amen, Sorry And The Sinatras, Mutation and current Michael Monroe gunslinger Rich Jones has been announced as the guitarist for all of the October tour dates.

TRACK ONE: 'EASILY LED'

Tom: "'Easily led, led astray' it's actually about lead poisoning! I'm fairly unique as someone who suffers from it because I work with stained glass, which is one of those shitty products that should be banned, but it isn't! I have to watch my lead levels, so it's a silly daft lyric I came up with, 'easily led'."

Paul: "They used to put that on my school report; he's easily led. By Steve Jones back in the day, now it's Tom Spencer!"

So is Steve Jones anywhere on the album?

Tom: "No. Not only did we try, but at one point after Chris left, he said he'd love to play on it, and our hopes were raised because it would be a nice part of the story. It proved impossible because he wouldn't go into a studio because of Covid."

Paul: "He's very paranoid about his health, but he didn't want to be in a studio with an engineer. He said he would have done it, but he's not on it, which is a shame, but that's the end of it." ▶

TRACK TWO: 'GOLD AND TRUTHFUL'

Tom: "I reckon this one is more old school Professionals in weight and tempo. The gist of it is, as an old school punk, the cardinal sin was to be middle-aged, and now we've gone way past that. I mean, I'm a granddad, and it's a kind of tribute to our grandparents in a way. The verses are stories of not just a great golden generation but how neighbourly they were, leaving your front door open and the generation that's gone, I guess."

TRACK THREE: 'SPIKE ME BABY'

Tom: "This is a fascinating one. Me and Paul are always on the phone talking songs and what have you. I phoned him up in the afternoon, and he sounded really positive, then at about six that evening, he's all down and full of self-doubt. Then he rings late at night and realises what's happened and tells me the story about eating chocolate from his daughter's (Holly) fridge."

Paul: "She only lives two doors down from me, and I'd been putting up some shelves, so I just helped myself to some food out of her fridge; I didn't realise what I'd eaten. But that night I was really freaking out, 'what's fucking wrong with me blah blah blah', I got through the night, and a couple of days later, she was clearing out her fridge, and she came in and said 'You didn't take any of these the other day did you?', I said I might have had some chocolate, yeah. It turns out they were her dope cakes! I don't smoke dope and never have done; when you don't know that you've taken it, I thought I might die... You little fucker... I was really spaced out (laughing)."

Tom: "When I spoke to him the last time that night, Paul was on about calling for an ambulance when his wife put some music on, and he went 'Ooh that sounds good', which is where the lyrics come from: 'Marley sounds good tonight, Dali makes sense tonight'."

"They used to put that on my school report; he's easily led. By Steve Jones back in the day, now it's Tom Spencer!"
Paul Cook



TRACK FOUR: 'PUNK ROCK AND A HARD PLACE'

Tom: "Co-written by Chris just before the time we broke down. It's about a bit of self-doubt, I guess Covid gave you time to doubt about band stuff when you step back from it, and it's about insomnia because me and him tend to text each other at four in the morning. Both wide awake climbing the walls, all stressed out."

TRACK FIVE: 'M'ASHES'

A song written about Paul taking Steve's mum's ashes to L.A.
Paul: "You know about the problems with Steve Jones and his mum from the book. He couldn't come over to her funeral, so I was going to L.A. and I said I'd bring them (her ashes) over. I put them in my bag and gave them to him. He's got his Mum's ashes, and he can deal it with it in his own way."

That's a really heartwarming, almost cinematic story.

Tom: "Doing the lyrics... I think it's more a tribute to their (Cook and Jones) friendship. The line at the end is 'Sad reunion way too late, say goodbye and thank your mate'. The first verse is Paul, the second verse is Steve, and the third is the ashes, very metaphorically."

That's quite a special bond when someone takes a friend's mother's ashes to them.

Tom: "It's brotherly. I had to be quite presumptuous when writing the lyrics to this because I don't know Steve like I know Paul."

TRACK SIX: 'HEART'BURN'

Paul: "We co-wrote this one with Jonny Weathers, our local friend. I played some stuff on his solo release, so we've got a connection there. We co-wrote it and then elaborated on it."

STARS AND BARS:
L-R PAUL COOK, TOSHI OGAWA,
TOM SPENCER



Tom: "He and Paul sent this piece of music with a great riff and completely different words. I like to get a few ailments into the words, and I suffer terribly from indigestion, so this is to get us an endorsement from Rennie!"

Paul: "Jonny plays lead guitar on this one." We're only six tracks in, and I can see all of these working live. How are you going to pick the setlist for the October tour?

Tom: "It's a really nice problem. Even for the August tour we have to pick between 'I Didn't See It Coming' and 'What In The World' plus possibly a cover for the encore, so now we're introducing a third, and yeah, it's a nice problem to have. We had a rehearsal as a three-piece before Chris (Catalyst) came down, and me and Paul were scared, of like a forty-five-minute set, but we did it, and it was great, great to get back. But you do get doubts. We're out running and stuff because we do an energetic set, and we need to be gig fit. This is the longest in my life I haven't played live or been on a plane."

Paul: "For the August run, it'll be from 'What In The World' and 'Didn't See It Coming' and then in October, we'll introduce a few new tracks; I like playing the new stuff."

Any anxiety about getting back into a room full of people all jumping about?

Paul: "Yeah, I'm worried; I'm going to have to keep my distance from the fans, you know who all want a picture and are all jumping over you. I caught Covid on the last Stiff Little Fingers tour. I didn't realise I had it, but I came back, and I was laid out, not really bad but just tired and achy because I'd just come off tour. I had the test a month or so later, and I had the antibodies, so I mean, we've got to be really careful."

Tom: "I'm not scared of getting covid; of course, I'm scared about getting it and passing it on."

Paul: "Holly's (Cook) guitarist got Covid, he wasn't feeling well after a gig, but they'd been in a van with him for four hours... She's all right; she's tested negative, but she's got to give it a good few days. It's still there; you can't ignore it, but we've got to get on with life and live with it, I guess. Luckily enough, our audience isn't the twenty to thirty-year-olds who are passing it around; they've all been double jabbed! We'll still be at the merch stand but with masks on and tables but sadly no selfies."

Tom: "We love that, and we thrive on it; we don't do it out of duty; we want to get out there and meet people."

TRACK SEVEN: 'NEVER SAY NEVER'

Tom: "This one was inspired by Cookie in interviews." Because it's the one thing people always ask you in interviews, will the Sex Pistols ever get back together?

Tom: "The irony is the lyrics are quite now, but they were meant to be quite ambiguous. 'Never Say Never' is about getting back with your girlfriend or whatever, but there's an element of songcraft in there. But he would always be asked that question, and he'd reply, 'no no no no, oh, but never say never!'"

Paul: (deadpan) "I just say never now; it's safe to say never now."

TRACK EIGHT: 'SO NO GO'

Paul: "Another weird title, but there you go, that's where we're at."

Tom: "It was originally titled 'Cockney Wanker'. Cookie had this riff, and I came up with the melody, and we played around with lyrics. Funnily enough, it's got a similar feel to the song before about not going back over your own footsteps. Possibly not the same inspiration as 'Never Say Never' it's more of a love song." Which songs of the album are you looking forward to playing live?

Tom: "We finished the album last week, so haven't gotten into that, really. You're the first person apart from our manager who's heard it, so we haven't had any reaction to the album yet, but we'll get a vibe of what people like. I can imagine doing 'Easily Led'. I think that will go down great. It will be about balancing the set." (At this moment, Paul's L.A. manager phones up, and Tom says, "we may be getting the verdict". We don't, or if Paul had found out, then he's got a great poker face!).

Paul: "I'm liking them all; they're different to 'What In The World'." Tom: "'M'ashes would well live, but we'll have to sit down and work it (the set) out."

Paul: "At the moment, we play half from 'WITW' and half from 'Didn't See It Coming', so I think it'll be the same again but a third of the set from each. You pick the three or four best tracks from each album, and we've easily got four from this one which would go down well live as well. It's a great problem to have, though. When we first got back together, we

NO FUTURE

The Sex Pistols remain both current and headline news as the founding members of Britain's most culturally explosive band headed to the high court to settle their artistic differences. John Lydon lost his court battle against the other band members which now means Danny Boyle's 'Lonely Boy' Disney/FX six-part TV Series will be able to use original Sex Pistols recordings in the show. The series is based on Steve Jones's best-selling autobiography 'Lonely Boy: Tales From A Sex Pistol' (which was released to great critical acclaim in 2016) and is due to air in 2022 (DTBC) on FX. Lydon had claimed the unanimous or majority rule/BMA agreement the band had all signed back in 1998 was akin to "slave labour" and "like a total trap or prison." The judge, however, thought otherwise.

After the Sex Pistols last UK show at London's Hammer-smith Apollo on September 2nd 2008, there were hopes and tentative mutterings that a few 45th or even 50th anniversary gigs may be in the pipeline. However, judging from Lydon's vociferous response to the ruling on his website (see below) and on a breakfast television interview plus Paul Cook's words below it seems we may never see the four originals Pistols sharing a stage again.

On August 17th Paul Cook spoke to Vive Le Rock in an exclusive interview a few days before the verdict was announced.

"Please don't ask me about the details of the court case because I can't talk about it as it is ongoing. All I will say is that it's just very sad that it came to this, in this surreal courtroom being grilled by a bunch of cunts in wigs, when we should have all been sat down together and sorting it out really." Later in the interview, we came back around to the Sex Pistols. Paul continued: "A lot of young kids don't know the Sex Pistols story, we think they do because we know it but they don't. They know the names, Rotten, Vicious etc. but they don't really know the story." Tom Spencer added: "If Malcolm wasn't dead you'd have thought he's instigated this because it's the most they've been talked about in years. Suddenly they're on the BBC news." Paul cutting in (speaking in a faux American voice): "Look out for the film of the courtroom drama! I used to say, never say never when it comes to the Sex Pistols. Now it's safe to say it's just never."

On August 31st, a few days after the verdict in which the judge ruled in favour of Paul Cook, Steve Jones, Glen Matlock and Sid Vicious's estate, John Lydon posted a lengthy statement via his website. He said: "I am the lead singer and songwriter, frontman, image, the lot, you name it. I put it there. How is that not relevant? It is dumbfounding to me. It is so destructive to what the band is and so I fear that the whole project might be extremely negative. How can anyone think that this can proceed without consulting me and deal with my personal life in this, and my issues in this, without any meaningful contact with me before the project, is announced to the world. I don't think there are even words that I can put forward to explain quite how disingenuous this is. As I said in the lyrics of The Order of Death, This is what you want, this is what you get..."

On the eve of his spoken word tour Lydon then also appeared on Good Morning Britain on the 7th of September where he called Cook and Jones "Filthy liars" after claiming he was forced into the court case and that he never denied them the right to use the Sex Pistols music he just asked a question.

To read the full statement go to Johnlydon.com Finally, both Paul Cook and Tom Spencer sent in their final words on the whole sorry matter to VLR on September 1st 2021. Tom: "It's a shame the main man (Steve Jones) hid and left Cookie to take the stand and the stress. I saw, first hand, the effect all this court business had on Cookie, in the build-up and then during the case itself. We were trying to put the 'SNAFU' album to bed and the added pressure of it all was making him ill. The only real winners, as usual, were the respective lawyers."

Paul: "The court case was a depressing shit show. It was the last place I wanted to be on my 65th birthday. In hindsight, we should, as a band, have gone to the pub and sorted it all out over a couple of pints. Everybody needs to have a serious word with themselves."

The band's courtroom fallout continues to stumble and tumble along. With both John Lydon and The Professionals out on tour and in the public eye once more it's doubtful we've seen or heard the last of this latest Sex Pistols drama.

John Lydon: court decision on Danny Boyle film 'so destructive' for Sex Pistols

Paul Cook says, who lost case against bandmates over use of music in TV series, says he would have been 'wounded down'

In a new written statement, John Lydon has responded with worry and dismay after losing a court case over the use of music by the Sex Pistols in an upcoming TV series, directed by Danny Boyle.

Lydon, known as Johnny Rotten during his time fronting the punk band, had been suing drummer Paul Cook and guitarist Steve Jones after Lydon perceived the use of Pistols songs in the series Pistol. Lydon lost the case, with a judge ruling that Jones and Cook were allowed to override him using a majority rule created at the time of the band's 1998 BMA agreement.

Lydon had claimed he wasn't aware of the extent of the agreement, but judge Sir Anthony Mann said: "I reject the suggestion made by him that he did not really know or appreciate its effect. That piece of evidence was a corroborated statement. It is highly likely that, even if he did not know of the BMA, it will have been explained to him and he will have understood its effect."

A statement has now been published on Lydon's website. It claims that Lydon was only made aware of the announcement of Pistol hours before it was made, and was not made aware of how the band would be portrayed in it. The statement continues:

"For more than 25 years the Sex Pistols have operated on the basis of unanimous decision making. The entire production is the first time that the unanimous approval has not been granted. It is disappointing that a High Court judge has decided that John Lydon is bound by an undated agreement signed in 1998, which imposes on the Sex Pistols a majority rule arrangement in place of the unanimous decision making process that has been followed for 23 years. Looking forward, to there is great uncertainty about the majority rule approach might be to waste down and clutter the way looking and image of the Sex Pistols, their staff."

Lydon also made direct comments, saying that the court decision was "so destructive to what the band is and so I fear that the whole project might be extremely negative. How can anyone think that this can proceed without consulting me and deal with my personal life in this, and my issues in this, without any meaningful contact with me before the project is announced to the world?"

Pistol is based on Steve Jones's memoir Lonely Boy: Tales from a Sex Pistol. Filming began in March, and no transmission date has been announced.

Jones and Cook had said in a joint statement immediately following the ruling in their favour: "We welcome the courts ruling in this case. It brings clarity to our decision making and upholds the band members' agreement on collective decision making. It has not been a pleasant experience, but we believe it was necessary to allow us to move forward and hopefully work together."

John Lydon loses court battle to stop Sex Pistols songs being used in a new TV series

John Lydon has lost a High Court battle to stop the Sex Pistols music from being used in a new TV drama.

Former drummer Paul Cook and guitarist Steve Jones had sued Lydon, aka Johnny Rotten, after he tried to veto the use of the punk group's songs in a show directed by Danny Boyle.

The judge said that the group had an agreement that such decisions could be taken on a "majority rule basis".

In court, Lydon said he rejected that deal, likening it to "slave labour".

The singer said the band member agreement (BMA) had never been adhered to and that requests for licences had previously been subject to individual members' vetoes.

However, a judge ruled on Monday that the contract was valid and active, and that the majority of the band could override any individual member's veto.

The judge, Sir Anthony Mann, also noted that Mr Lydon "had actually signed away his power to control the use of music rights" to publishing and music companies such as Warner, Chappell Music and BMA.

Lydon retained "only qualified rights of approval which could be exercised if he was being unreasonable", the judge said.

"It may be that these companies, for their own reasons, chose to seek his permission from time to time, but ultimately they could act as they saw fit."

In a joint statement after the ruling, Jones and Cook told the Press Association: "We welcome the courts ruling in this case. It brings clarity to our decision making and upholds the band members' agreement on collective decision making. It has not been a pleasant experience, but we believe it was necessary to allow us to move forward and hopefully work together."

John Lydon loses high court battle to stop Sex Pistols songs being used in new TV series

The singer dead name John Lydon, was attempting to stop drummer Paul Cook and guitarist Steve Jones from using their band's music in a show which will be released next year.

Former Sex Pistols frontman Johnny Rotten has lost a High Court battle with his ex-bandmates to stop the band's music being used in a new TV show about the group.

The punk group's former drummer Paul Cook and guitarist Steve Jones had been wanting to use the music, but Rotten had name John Lydon had opposed the move.

In a court ruling at the High Court on Monday, Sir Anthony Mann found Cook and Jones were entitled to invoke "majority voting rules" against their bandmate.

Cook and Jones welcomed the ruling.

"It brings clarity to our decision-making and upholds the band members' agreement on collective decision-making," they said in a statement.

"It has not been a pleasant experience, but we believe it was necessary to allow us to move forward and hopefully work together in the future with better relations."

◀ were really constrained. We just had 'DSIC', so we just played that, but once we got 'WITW' in the bucket, it was great because we had a choice, and we'll have even more choice now." Tom: "Sometimes you get the temptation to play for too long, and our set is pretty dynamic, not much more than an hour."

TRACK NINE: 'THE ELEGANT ART'

Paul: "This is one of my favourites; it's great. The title from a girlfriend (Jessica Jones) of ours who wrote a book about the elegant art of falling apart, which was about her troubles. I thought, great title; I'd better tell her we've used it as a song title, actually! We twisted it about."

Tom: "I had loads of lyrics about pretentious art."

Paul: "Tom thinks he's an artist so... (chuckling)."

Tom: "I am. I designed the fucking album cover, didn't I. I do dabble in art, but it's so revolting some of it, the galleries. People printing in diamond dust and charging forty grand after using a photo of Elvis's gun (exasperated). It's not even their photo... I find it complete bollocks when they then claim to be this great artist. Jamie Reid is entitled to do it. He's made art that's stood the test of time that we all still love. I know it's possibly bitterness, but there's a very ugly world; I like to get away from the music world, but the art world's a lot uglier, more cliquy and much more full of shit. I made stained glass for the cover of 'SNAFU' about the same size as a twelve-inch, and the vinyl will be embossed and really fancy. So when he says 'he thinks he's an artist' (looking at Paul and smiling), what does he know?"

You've literally just left the studio, so how was it working with Dave Draper?

Tom: "We came and went with Dave Draper; (originally) we went to a live studio because Dave had a little studio at the time, then went to Monkey's in Wales to do the backing tracks. Then because of Covid, we wanted to go to a London studio, so we took it to Tim Wills in Hammersmith. When we came towards

The message was so simple: if you wanna just get out, do something, just go and do it. Don't have any barriers, music, writing, painting, whatever you wanna do. Punk just released a lot of people with its message."

Paul Cook

completion, we realised it wasn't coming together, so we needed to go back to the same formula we used for 'WITW' phoned up Dave and back we went to him for the finishing touches."

Paul: "We had all these guitars on there from all over the place. We were swamped. Fucking 'ell what we are going to do? I overwhelmed us a little bit. We were taking stuff off all the time at Dave's to strip it back, which is a good thing to have, but we overdid it with the guitars."

Tom: "Because there were these enforced gaps between sessions, our memories were... Who played this bit? You look at all these files, and it's was for fuck's sake... So we had to recall and restart. Really this album should have been done in three months, but because of all the false starts (with Covid restrictions), it's taken over a year and a half. It was a mess that was completely sorted out by Dave Draper. He was our wolf, our cleaner."

TRACK TEN: 'ONLY HUMAN'

Tom: "My daughter bought the book 'Sapiens by (Yuval Noah) Harari, a bestseller, a big chunky nine hundred pager. It's the history of homo sapiens, and the more you read it, the more you think, what a bunch of cunts. Even the very early homo sapiens where ever they emerged to they've got evidence of all extinction which match wherever we spread around the planet. So putting plastic bottles up whale's arses, we're not the worst generation because they've all been cunts, and that's what it's about. We're not an overly political band, but on the last album, we had a song called 'Monkeys' (pausing); it's sometimes hard not to be worldly if not political when you look at the world going mad, and this is a little bit like that."

Paul: "It's just a song about being human, and we're all fallible human beings."

TRACK ELEVEN: 'CONSUMINATOR'

Paul: "This is totally personal to Tom, lyric-wise."

Tom: "The song had a long journey to whether it would make the album. The chord sequence comes from Paul and me mucking around and coming up with something weird. During the lockdown, I did muck around a song called 'Retrain' when the government said you should retrain around it. Then the singer from The Men They Couldn't Hang, the other band I play in, passed away, Stefan Cush. In a complete Covid situation, we were allowed to go to the funeral. Four and a half hours to a Welsh graveside, there for an hour and then had to drive back. When we carried his coffin, we went to put it in the hole, but they hadn't dug the hole big enough, so the line 'Your too big for the hill'... The lines and verses are all very personal stories from him and me, and because it's a tribute, arguably there wasn't a place for it on the album. We got Phil Cohen to play on it, and they managed to make it... I kept saying to them, think Friday night in Leicester Square, which was a valid part of 'DSIC' and to try and bring my personal thing to The Professionals. I don't know if we'll ever do it live, but it's got a (worthy) place on the album."

Any more intimate or secret gigs planned for 2021 like the Shepherd's Bush studio one or the live stream to help promote the new album?

Tom: "That first gig came about through circumstance because the roof of the Shepherd's Bush Empire had fallen and people had bought tickets to come to London, and the gig was pulled. So we suggested it as a thing to reward those people, and it was such a nice thing to do. Play to so few people, and then we all went to the pub together. It was like the perfect gig."

Paul: "The live stream was great actually and looked amazing. Fair play to our friend Mark (Sloper), who runs this; he's got connections. He does all our videos. He got the live stream together for us and really helped the band out, so we should give him a shout out."

The live stream felt like a massive shot in the arm because, like most people, we hadn't been to a gig in ages.

Tom: "It was a shot in the arm for us as well. We've got the gigs in October, and then it might be nice to do something in December. We can't do any other gigs because we've got the Stiff Little Fingers rescheduled tour in March 2022."

Paul: "It might give us something to do between October and December, a nice little private show somewhere for those who bought the album or fan club members."

Tom: "We should do a golden ticket, like Willy Wonka!"

How do you both see punk in 2021?

Paul: "I think the spirit is still there. A lot of people diss it,



KEEPIN' ON KEEPIN' ON

Tom Spencer is a man of many, many bands. As well as being half of the driving force behind the reformed Professionals since 2015, he has written and recorded with a plethora of bands, including (deep breath) The Lurkers, The Loyalties, The Yo Yo's, The Men They Couldn't Hang, Big Boy Tomato, Ginger Wildheart, Banjo Ramone and Fastlane Roogalator to name but a few. Tom's late father was the enigmatic and innovative London folk-rock musician and novelist John B Spencer. In the early nineties, original (Uxbridge) punks The Lurkers reformed and enrolled a young Tom Spencer and his spiky green hair to report for touring guitar duties. During this period, the band also (with Tom) recorded the 'Ripped And Torn' album. In the late seventies, Tom's father's band, John Spencer's Louts, were signed to Beggars Banquet, their London label mates, The Lurkers. The re-united Lurkers mainly toured throughout mainland Europe which included playing the inaugural 1996 Holidays In The Sun weekend in Blackpool, which has since become the iconic Rebellion Festival. More famously, in 1998, Tom teamed up with The Wildhearts bassist Danny McCormack to form the severely missed and underrated punk 'n' roll outfit, The Yo Yo's. The pair first met and bonded on a mini-bus journey headed for the North East to record some backing vocals for a Toy Dolls album. After an initial pair of well-received EPs, the newly formed Yo Yo's were signed to Sub Pop Records and released their excellent full-length debut 'Uppers And Downers' in July 2000. The four-piece toured with The Backyard Babies, 3CR and Anti Product and played their own headline tours and shows in Europe and the States. After a brief hiatus, the band reformed in 2005 and a new look Yo Yo's released the EP 'Given Up Giving Up' on Undergroove before eventually splitting due in part to in-band disagreements and Danny McCormack's then well-publicised drug issues. Around the year 2000/1, Tom also joined and remains in the punk/folk outfit The Men They Couldn't Hang. In October this year, the band will tour for the first time since the tragic passing of singer Stefan Cush in February 2021. It was on and off stage at one of Ginger legendary Birthday Bashes that Tom first met former Sex Pistol Paul Cook, and the pair subsequently stayed in touch. The drummer then enlisted Tom to step in and fill Steve Jones boots for the 2015's 100 Club gig. Founding Professional Steve Jones was and still is one hundred per cent supportive of Tom and the new line-up and even guested on two tracks for the 2017 comeback album 'What In The World'. Numerous tours, three EPs and a pandemic followed before Tom and the band could complete the recording of the excellent 'SNAFU' album. On top of both The Professionals and The Men They Couldn't Hang incoming tours, there's also a whisper of some possible Yo Yo's anniversary shows to boot. Ladies and gentlemen, Tom Spencer.



Name: "Tom Spencer."

Date and place of birth: "Shepherd's Bush, London on 30th June 1967."

Instruments you play: "Guitar, banjo, mandolin, ukulele, anything with a string really, they're all the same!"

Can you tell me how many albums have you appeared on in total? "No, because I've guested on loads of people's records, including my dad's. I don't know. I stopped keeping track when it went from vinyl to CD. I used to have them in a box, and then I lost the box; I'm not trying to be evasive; it's a bit like counting up how many women you've slept with, sometimes it's best not to add them up, you might be disappointed. I'm not very well documented in my own head."

How many bands have you been in? "Oh my God, that's even worse! At one time, (pausing) I have always been asked to dep (stand-in) for people like Chris Catalyst did for us, and I got quite good at learning things fast, so I was a bit of a go-to guy, but then I realised it was doing my head in. So I set back into just a couple of things which is The Men They Couldn't Hang and The Professionals, really. I've also been in The Urban Voodoo Machine, Vince Ray's Band and Ruby Throat... The more I think about it, the more I did. I've probably broken the record of the most albums and bands to have been in and yet not achieved commercial success! That's probably my strapline."

Away from The Professionals, which album are you most proud of? "I guess the one that's most often brought up is 'Upper And Downers' by The Yo Yo's. We got a good amount of life out of that, touring America and doing those things. I keep talking about a solo album, maybe next. People keep asking me to do that, so I'm going to get all the people whose album I've been on to guest on mine; it'll have the most guests than any other album in the world!"

Favourite Professionals song new or old to play live? "Oh Gawd blimey, from the old ones it's definitely 'Kick Down The Doors', I think it's their best song from the old days. It's a monumental tune that's stood the test of time more than any other. From 'What In The World' I like 'Rewind' I also like 'Let Go'. I really enjoy playing that live because it's a real kick-ass one, and it's about my son."

Without any real fanfare, Tom Spencer has quietly and respectfully made the position of Professionals frontman undoubtedly his own. His input, energy and presence mean six years after tentatively taking to the 100 Club stage; the Professionals creatively continue to go from strength to strength. The bands future seems more promising than at any other period in their rollercoaster history, and that, in no small part, is unequivocally down to Tom Spencer.

'These old punk rockers doing it in their fifties and sixties'. I liken it to... I grew up listening to Bowie, Roxy Music and The Faces; if those bands played again, I'd be there, it'd be no different; it's a fan thing. It's what something meant to you at a certain period in your life when you was a teenager that meant so much that it never leaves you. You've got that spirit, you've got those memories, and you go back and re-live them, and I don't think there's anything wrong with it at all."

Tom: "That's the perfect answer. I mean, music is never more magical than in your teenage and for most of us, music is what got you through it. When you see these guys, couples, it's lovely to see their kids have finished university or whatever, and they're free. They are the ones collecting, buying vinyl and merch and making this whole other industry."

Paul: "I guess some new kids are coming through as well a younger generation. It inspired so many people back in the day. The punk rock scene or whatever you want to call just inspired people to get out there and do all sorts of things in life. It was an extraordinary moment, not just in music. The message was so simple if you wanna just get out, do something, just go and do it. Don't have any barriers, music, writing, painting, whatever you wanna do. Punk just released a lot of people with its message."

Tom: "Having said that, we're not going to try and make a 1977 record despite believing in it. It would be disingenuous to do a '1-2-3-4'. We've all grown up together, and we want the

weight and the sentiment and the genuineness, and this album is genuine to us."

Paul: "This album is genuine to us, and what we're feeling at the moment it might not be classic punk rock, but we never were in the first place. The Professionals. This is how we've evolved and where we are at this moment."

Any gigs coming up that you're really looking forward to?

Paul: "I think the (Highbury) Garage again for me because it's our London show. We played there a few years ago for the album launch, which was special for us, and it'll be the same vibe again. It's a personal thing. I'm a Londoner, and it's my local gig."

Tom: The tour we've just done in August was done as a warm-up for the Stone Valley Festival, and all the dates were in a small radius around London. This one we're going countryside, which we haven't done since pre-lockdown, and we love it out there. (laughing) Cheaper pints, more friendly people."

Paul: "I like playing outside of London as well. It's a great excuse to get out and see the country again. If we weren't in a band, we wouldn't be doing it. That's one of the great things about being in a band, meeting people in every city and going all over the place; they'll all be special to us." **VLR**

'SNAFU' is out October 8th on JTP Records
The Professionals tour the UK in October

PAUL COOK

THE PROFESSIONALS

2021 has been a strange year for music. What have been the highlights for you personally and professionally?

"Professionally it's got to be putting 'SNAFU' to bed. It felt like we'd taken too long making it, but then again that was down to various stages of restriction. Concluding the farcical court case was great, but only because it was an end to the stress. The whole thing was a pointless mess that made lawyers richer. Mind you, Malcom would have loved the publicity. Personally it's been nice chilling out, recharging the batteries for a busy 2022."

Did you manage to get to many gigs this year? Anything stand out?

"I went to watch the cast band from Lonely Boy. It was good seeing myself younger and better looking. Otherwise like everyone else - no I didn't."

How was your recent tour and what gig by the Professionals stands out for you this year?

"Probably the most sober tour ever - Desperate Measures kept drinking our rider while we were on stage, bastards! It was great getting out there again, great to leave London, great to see the people, great to hit those drums."

Vive Le Rock loved your new album 'SNAFU'. Was it an easy album to put together and how do you think it stands up against previous Professionals albums?

"Making it got us through Covid. We got together when restrictions allowed. It's only recently we've got such a positive reaction to it. Before then, we had time to doubt, too much thinking time. Now I believe we've continued The Prof story in a good way."

Hopefully 2022 will bring better times. What do you and the Professionals have lined up for next year?

"Maybe going to the States to do the cancelled gigs from 2020? We've got the SLF tour in March. There's a cool rock 'n' roll cruise gig in Greece in August. Apart from that, we're looking at grabbing some festivals and then touring ourselves again in the autumn. We're recording an EP this December for release on the Fingers' tour."

What's Christmas like in the Cook household?

"My wife Jeni's beliefs mean it's not celebrated (officially) but she's a party girl so the Christmas vibe prevails. Holly, my daughter, lives just up the road, so we do the family thing, maybe visit one of my sisters. I sometimes pop round Tom's for champagne and oysters on the way, he does that sort of thing. He throws a mean Christmas ho ho ho."

Finally, is it true your support band on the SNAFU tour are possibly the greatest band this country has ever seen since the Sex Pistols?!

"I think Desperate Measures are the future of rock 'n' roll rehab."

'SNAFU' is out now on JTP



SELECTED

SNAFU Album + SNAFU Tour

REVIEWS

“The Professionals sound like the last gang in town, and with a band with much to look forward to. It’d be nice to think that in 10 years when people ask for “the old stuff” they mean this. It deserves that treatment.” 9 out 10 <https://maximumvolumemusic.com/review-the-professionals-snafu-2021/>

!!!!!!!!!!!!

<http://www.whisperinandhollerin.com/reviews/review.asp?id=15714>

“Cook and Spencer have crafted 11 honest rock n’ roll songs that sit well in the discography and seal the legacy of the band.” <http://rpmonline.co.uk/2021/10/15/the-professionals-snafu-jtp-records/>

“The Professionals aren’t relying on past glories. SNAFU places the band in the here and now and opening shots don’t come much better than ‘Easily Lead’....seems to suggest there’s much more to come from this quartet.” <https://www.themidlandsrocks.com/the-professionals-snafu/>

“Whether it’s punk, power-pop or good old rock ‘n’ roll is open to debate, but it hits all the right spots, and the hour-long set is over far too quickly.” <https://ipamusic.co.uk/?p=7042>

“SNAFU” is the sound of some friends getting together, playing some tunes and having some fun.

They’re not trying to reinvent the wheel or seeing themselves up to be anything they’re not. In fact while Mr Lydon has been touring around recently to make sure a spotlight is pointed in his direction, his former bandmate steals some thunder by going out and getting on with the job of playing music. And that for me is just fine and dandy, especially when the tunes are this good.

<https://www.threesongsandout.com/single-post/the-professionals-snafu-album-review>

“The Professionals a band that everyone can relate to It’s as if Cook and Spencer know how to tap into our consciousness and nudge us back in the right direction in life.”

<https://myglobalmind.com/2021/10/11/the-professionals-snafu-review/>

“The Professionals are on fire. They are the oldest best new band in the UK right now and are far better than they need to be and serious contenders.” <https://louderthanwar.com/the-professionals-manchester-the-factory-live-review/>

“reinforces the fact that old rockers should not necessarily leave the scene to make way for the new.” <https://www.backseatmafia.com/live-review-the-professionals-desperate-measures-newcastle-cluny-19-10-21/>

“They were joyous to be able to play live in front of fans again and those that took the time out to visit The Forum certainly didn’t regret it one bit!” <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2021/10/15/the-professionals-show-you-how-its-done/>

“no one departs disappointed.”

<http://www.themidlandsrocks.com/the-professionals-desperate-measures-hazard-the-craufurd-arms-wolverton-on-27th-october-2021/>

“a hugely enjoyable set of anthems”

8 out 10

<https://sonicabuse.com/the-professionals-snafu-album-review/>

MANAGEMENT:
LIAM FEEKERY
liam.feekery@mac.com

PR
MATT REYNOLDS
matt@savagegringo.com

www.theprofessionalsband.com - www.facebook.com/theprofessionalsband -
<https://www.instagram.com/theprofessionalsband> – www.twitter.com/officialpros