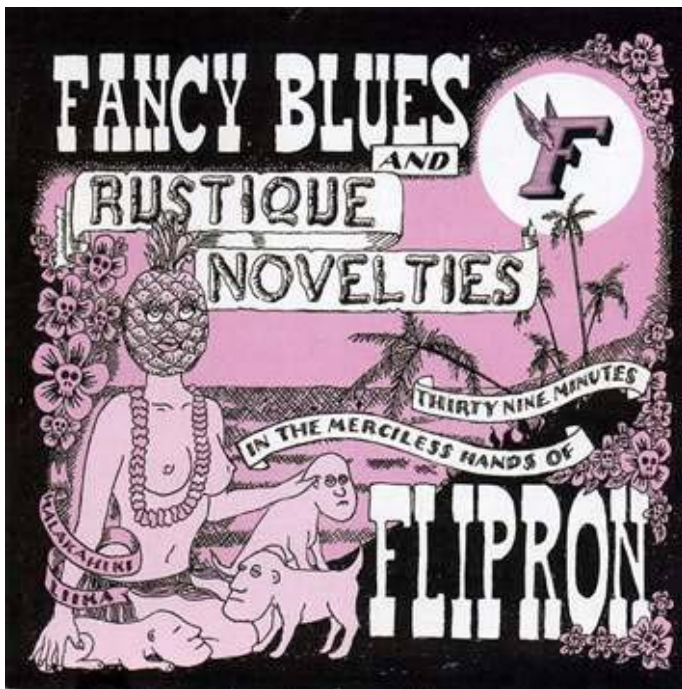


If their album 'Fancy Blues And Rustique Novelties' hadn't been so definitely a 2004 release it would have been my number two album of the year, but there you go, my hands are tied! All you really need know about it is that it is an embarrassment of melodic riches, wrapped around viciously sparkling lyrics, and these two elements cavort together in an almost indecent way. You can find out more at www.flipron.co.uk and their charming label www.tinydog.co.uk and if this interview doesn't leave you with a desire to do so then you *must* look for a psychiatrist with the utmost urgency.



FLIPRON



You don't, it seems to me, to have any new records mentioned?

We've got an extended mix of *Hanging Round the Lean-to with Grandad* coming out as a single at the end of January, & then a new single & a whole new album to follow in March. The new album is *almost* finished!

Now I don't want to bore you, but let's look at your album and perhaps you can give the readers more of an idea of what's all about, because they really do need a copy.

They do, they do....

'Raindrops Keep Falling On The Dead' – this is one of the ones which reminds me of Carter, except you have that spooky organ. Wouldn't you like to know when you're going to die, so you could be elsewhere? And do you ever come up with a good title and think how do I fit a song round that, a bit like this one?

No I wouldn't! & for the purposes of the song, you can't be elsewhere even if you knew. But an awareness that Death is above you, *watching* you, with sand trickling through the tiny waist of his egg-timer in one boney hand & a dirty great scythe in the other, it puts the way you live your life into context. If it was your last day alive, your *last hour*, then the kind of petty squabbles & miniscule acts of selfish grabbing wouldn't have a place. Likewise, if you thought that any of the people that you interact with might be living their last day, which they very well might, you'd find your disposition toward them more generous. It's the not knowing that is important. If you knew that you or anyone else had, say, a further 26 years & 48 days to go, (confirming our assumptions, that we have *plenty of time*) then the context of your interactions isn't sharpened at all, but the fact that at any moment, you don't know when, you could be just another corpse trundling into some municipal incinerator, then you can start to live each moment in a way that you can imagine, 'well at least I wasn't being a total twat when I snuffed it'.

I don't know though, behaving like a twat from time to time is one of life's many pleasures. It's complicated. Tell you what, I could snuff it before I even finish answering your questions! That'd teach me to get on my high bloody horse..... & Yes, I do come up with the odd cool title & try to write a song around it, but it never works. It just sounds contrived & shit.

'Rusty Casino Casino Rustique' – ah, the accordion, don't you just want to sit on it, the way it can make you go all world-weary and reflective? What attracts you to this shattered boulevard of sound? Full marks for getting 'piss off!' into a song. Reminds me of when Giles came out with 'pillock!' in Buffy.

Oooh, I like *shattered boulevard of sound!* That makes us sound *very* cool. Yeah. Our organist Joe pointed out to me that New Order got 'piss off' into their song *Your Silent Face* in 1983. Generally I find New Order quite an unrewarding listen but Joe loves them, or loved them in his teens, at least.

The accordion, which I love, Mrs Flipron gave me for Christmas one year. I still can't play *Jingle Bells*, in fact the only tune I can really play is this one, but I get away with it

I never know where to put people like you, especially since the care in the community program, but I think stuck firmly between Carter USM and Alex Harvey is fair. There's a twisted story-telling excellence here that needs to be explained. Wherefore this wordiness?

Ah Mr Mercer, you're very kind! I'm obsessed with writing good words for my songs. Actually, no I'm not. But it feels as if I am because most music has such utter shit for words. Lazy, ill-conceived drivel to pour over your music like watery custard. It's embarrassing. I'm constantly amazed at how shockingly lazy other songwriters are. Bands spend small fortunes on instruments & stuff, work for days on arrangements, weeks recording, but spend maybe a couple of hours on half an idea for a lyric & leave it at that. I'm not a naturally gifted lyricist, but I really work like some kind of beast to drag something I feel is worthwhile up from my very average subconscious. Sadly my imagination isn't peopled with a menagerie of unusually talented spooks & monsters, it's more like shopping at your local Spar. There are probably songwriters out there with imaginations more like the deli counter at Fortnum & Mason's, but they don't push themselves. To me it comes neither easily nor naturally, so I have to dig deep & then I polish the stories & words that come out. I listen. I check every line. Every word. If it doesn't stand scrutiny, I chuck it or change it. People shouldn't have to listen average songs with sloppy lyrics. I work for months on a song. Jeez, I didn't want to start this interview from halfway up my own arse, but your opening question is more or less an anal probe.....

You've got gigs booked as far ahead as August next year – somebody likes you!

We like to flatter ourselves that we put on a good show. We make an effort. We entertain in our own way! We get a lot of offers too, but we can't do them all. Nobody pays enough. We're not children. We can't live on pocket money! We can't even afford to play in Manchester, so the offers to play in somebody's university in Carolina or unpaid openers for bigger names' tours in Italy are just out of the question. But if the money's right, we'll go *anywhere!*



because the band give it context, make it sound good. They let me get away with a lot of arsing about on instruments I can't really play. The line '...it's nothing personal, they just don't like your face, so piss off!' comes from our drummer Mike being pulled over for no reason by the police when he was driving a nice new hire car. They actually said - 'It's nothing personal, but your face didn't fit the car.' I don't know how much more personal you can get, telling someone that their very genes mark them out as a shameless criminal. Mike is like a magnet for bored coppers. They won't leave him alone, poor man, it's not as if he's ever really done anything wrong. Don't ever get a lift home with him. Takes hours with all those 'routine checks.'

'Big Baboon' - and this cabaret tinkling. How is it, or why is it, that people come together and find they can all handle this music? There can't be many than a handle of musicians who would and you've all met! Can you recall where the idea of the baboon came from? It's handy it rhymes with so much.

The band are very natural musicians. They're all much better than me. They feel their way around a song quite intuitively. I've long given up trying to impose my arrangements on them. They'll just do it their way in the end. There is something of a primate obsession in the band. Joe paints watercolours of monkeys & apes in his spare time. We're going to have a little gallery of his work on our website. You don't want to know where the idea of the Baboon came from. It's quite long & involved. It's not good interview fodder. It's *Pseud's Corner* material....

'Skeletons On Holiday' is a charming absurdity that rolls along like 60's children's tv music. Does it come back to haunt you at all? Ska meets the Tony Hart generation? What bones did you play on this or is that the fanciful claim of men who can only lie?!! (The Russian band Necrostellar get their bones from morgues.)

I believe that the bones in question are goat femurs. I may be wrong. Sheep's or maybe even some by-product of the beef industry. But you won't find us sniffing round morgues for the tools of our trade. How do you persuade the staff at a morgue to let you have a bone?.... 'I don't suppose you've got a spare adult male tibia knocking around? Er.. I'm in a band &, well...'

'Curtains' -and that soppy romantic heart exposed with your most poetic intentions and music not out of place of a classic Hamlet ad. What's going on? When people tell you how jolly you are live do you ever snap and rant about that mere inches form their startled faces? It's a beautiful piece.

Certainly not. I'm just pleased when someone's enjoyed a gig. Plus I've

got product to sell. I'm Charming Salesman Incarnate, like the grotesque lovechild of Nigel Havers & Del Trotter. I'm glad you like the tune. I'm quite proud of it because melodically it's perhaps the most sophisticated tune I've written. Well it's got lots of different chords in it anyway. I think about fifteen. I like to congratulate myself on that fact from time to time. Buy myself a drink.

'Hungamunga' teeters on madness, but you've admitted on your website it's because you watch *Last Of The Summer Wine* and know that's you in forty years time, and you secretly fancy all the women. I think that's sick.

That's from your imagination, not mine! Have you been watching *Harold & Maude* on DVD? The E-Type Hearse is superb. Worryingly, I don't think *Last Of The Summer Wine* is us in the future, I think it's a pretty close portrait already. We're currently all living in & around Glastonbury & I sense that we're only too willing to let the talons of small town life close ever tighter around our lizardy old throats.

'Whispering Ghost' - the ukulele? Martyn Dormer from Skiffle Haze recommended you to me. He's not the only smitten by this puny instrument then? A lyrically morbid or sad song?

My liking for the ukulele comes from my love of 1920s Hawaiian blues records. Fantastic steel guitar wizards like Sol Hoopii & King Benny Nawawe always had a uke strummer really pushing the rhythm behind them. I suspect I'm not selling the ukulele to you at all well with my fetish for vintage Hawaiiana. Anyway, a really loud electric version of this song is on the B-side of the forthcoming *Grandad* single. It breaks out into sort of up-tempo spooky ska in the middle. Joe also plays organ in Neville Staple's band, playing old Specials' hits, & he's got *really* good at those bubbling off beats. It then ends



with what sounds like some cowboys singing doo-wop in a 1950s musical. That makes it sound a little camp, which it probably is. But you're right, it is at heart a sad song. The very concept of a ghost is a sad one.

'Dead Lovers Reborn In The City, Reunite In Passionate Impact' is another curious amalgam of past sounds. Do you have, between you, an encyclopaedic knowledge of forgotten styles? And out of it you make a scary story fit for any Goth.

Yeah, we're pretty good with cranky old styles. It's years on the dole gives you that. When the only music you can afford to buy is from charity shops, you learn the whole range of the once-popular-now-forgotten genres. You get an eye for a good one though. Anything with a Hula Girl or a Sombrero on the cover or the word 'Gypsy' crowbarred into the title is probably going to yield something of interest. If it says 'Teach yourself to Tango with Marcel's Accordion Serenade', you're onto a winner!

'The Vicious Car & Love Poem' – dark cars? I bet you laugh scornfully at that shit advert on TV right now. ("I saw one at eight minutes past, on the other side of town, ridden by a tosser!") You write poetry? (Hides pistol behind back.)

I suppose it has the word *Poem* in its title to convey the idea that you might want to listen to the words. Also, calling it a 'song' seems inappropriate. It's a little too peculiar to be a song. I don't write poems, no. I have done, but they were no good! At all. I need music to give the words the emotional element that I haven't the skill to communicate through words alone. But you can put your pop gun away about poetry too! I don't believe you! You're a writer! You *know* what words can

do! You *must* be aware of people like Lorca, or Rimbaud, or at the very least Ginsberg, Ferlingetti et al.

I think you're pulling my leg with your bracketted asides on poetry! I'd bet that there's a book somewhere on your shelves with one of those names on it...*Every* rock & roll fan has at least got a little black & white paperback of *Howl* on their shelves, even if it's wedged between their old GCSE revision books on Hamlet & one of those Hare Krishna books on vegetarian cooking that gothy looking students get given when they walk down Carnaby Street... & albums like *Bringing It All Back Home* or *Astral Weeks* are crammed with moments that read just like calamitous, beat versions of the *Somnambular Ballad* or Rimbaud's *Drunken Boat*... No, I reckon you're a secret listener to *Poetry Please* on Radio 4!

'A Trip To Jaywick Sands' is a bit weird. And I bet Rat Scabies was glad to be shot of that gizmo he sold you.

Jaywick Sands is a weird place. There's a little area on the edge of the town that is made up entirely of 1930s seaside chalets, all mock-tudor/alpine lodge style mini bungalows, laid out in little avenues named after the makes of car, like Riley Avenue or Alvis Avenue. & it's almost quite groovy, but it isn't. It has an air of desolate surreality about it. It's a grindingly uncomfortable place that has sunk its worn out detures into my imagination. I had to exorcise it via the medium of Hawaiian guitar & distorted noises. I made Rat an offer he couldn't refuse for the device. Speaking of whom, it was Rat who first got me to watch *Harold & Maude*. He *made* me watch it. He's an amazing musician. He plays a lot more than just drums. He's got a very *fine ear* too, as we musicians are fond of saying.





‘Hanging Round The Lean-to With Grandad’ – why is that song so weirdly touching?

I’m pleased that you feel that. It’s the only one of my songs that was written flat out in half an hour. Most of us have some memory of a grandparent in their childhood. Maybe it’s to do with that. The words are based on dreams I had. You can’t argue with your subconscious. Then I found this sort of plinky, Clive Dunn style melody & suddenly this gentle little song appeared. Clive Dunn’s novelty hit *Granddad* was, I believe, written by Herbie Flowers, who also played bass on *Walk On The Wild Side*. It delights me that only one person links Lou Reed to Clive Dunn.

When Martyn Dormer first tried to get a copy of your album at one of your gigs he was told someone had one in the car, and later that they’d forgotten to bring any. Are you not the most organised band around?

No. That’s what managers are for. We musicians prefer to ponce about pondering our impending decrepitude & ingesting whatever miserable Ginster’s product we’ve been fleeced for from the fridges of the motoway services. How can I put it? We are *fucking useless*....? We started recording our new album in April, supposedly to be completed in two weeks. But it’s still not quite finished now in December! Tiny Dog Records must be the most patient label around...

Look at your website! People don’t want to be sent to Amazon to buy an album. They want to pay by paypal on your site after you’ve wooed them with soundfiles. Are you mad? It’s like you seeing something you like in a shop window and the bloke in the shop saying it’s available in the Amazon basin. You lot have been recording in that

garden shed for too long.

Point taken! We’ll add it to the list of threats we send to the Flipron webmaster. Our bass player Mark is pretty handy with this sort of thing. I’ll mention it to him...

I was going through some old Bull & Gate stuff the other day and was amazed to find a Flipron flyer from 1995 or 1996? How long has this band been going and in all this time is this your only release so far?

Yeah, that was us. A different line-up playing different tunes. As you correctly observed, we’re not the most organised of bands, so it kept falling apart, months would go by when we did nothing, then we’d play a few gigs, we’d grind to a halt again. About five years ago we started getting quite good. Then we decided that we were going to make an album. Then Tiny Dog said they’d release it. Then we finished it. It came out August 2004.

Complete: Flipron’s album deserves to take centre stage in your house for a trial period of not less than six months because.....

hmm.... you *need* it because, well, after our single comes out in January, someone far less cool than yourself will put a Flipron song on a compilation for you, as if they’d discovered us before you, when they hadn’t. Except they *had*. Well, you’d been *meaning* to buy the album, but you hadn’t. You’ll like the song quite a lot, but it will be too late to claim us as your own. You’ll feel like the Russian space scientists did when the yanks invaded the moon in 69. You’ll lie & say - ‘I’m *really glad* you put that Flipron song on because I’ve been meaning to check them out for months & months.’ It won’t wash. This will irritate you more than you care to admit.