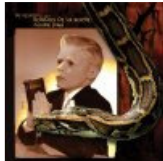


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What we actually know about the Residents can be comfortably written on the back of an eyeball with a four inch paintbrush. What we can take a healthy stab at however (if you'll pardon the Luis Buñuel allusion) is the band possibly formed in 1972 and in all probability released their first record, 'Santa Dog', the same year. Speculation surrounding the members' true identities are generally fended off by their management team The Cryptic Corporation - formed by Jay Clem, Homer Flynn, Hardy Fox, and John Kennedy in 1976 - all of whom strenuously deny having ever been band members (indeed Clem and Kennedy left the Corporation in 1982). Many long term fans however insist Fox and Flynn are The Residents, Flynn the singer and lyricist and Fox the musician, and a delve into the details of their publishing company Pale Pachyderm Publishing at the performance rights organization reveals Flynn and Fox as the composers of all original Residents songs.

Such probing around however is to entirely miss the point of a band who obviously feel their gender, ethnicity, personality, and any tabloid style private revelations are irrelevant to their listeners, preferring instead to encourage rumours, like the band members are all physically disfigured, are actually a Dutch band from Den Haag or, our favourite, that they are in fact The Beatles in disguise. Most recently they have insisted that the band members names are in fact Randy, Chuck, Bob, and Carlos (although drummer Carlos has apparently since left the group) and, on upcoming album *Coochie Brake* at least they aren't even called the Residents but Sonidos de la Noche (Sounds Of The Night). Clearly obfuscation (despite being an oxymoron), is the Residents raison d'être.



For the uninitiated the history of the Residents begins way back in the early '70s having decided on their name when Warner Brothers returned an early reel-to-reel demo tape with a rejection slip addressed to 'The Residents' the bands debut album *Meet the Residents* (the cover a parody of *Meet the Beatles*) was released in 1974 and within a year had sold a massive 40 copies. Their next recording *Not Available*, followed Bavarian composer N. Senada's 'Theory of Obscurity' (Senada may of course also be a Resident invention) and was immediately deleted - although crept out in 1978 - before which they released *The Third Reich 'N' Roll* ('76), a pastiche on 60's rock 'n' roll with a Nazi theme, each side of the record a single composition using recordings of classic rock & roll songs that were overdubbed and edited with new vocals and music before the original songs were removed leaving entirely new performances. The album which many consider to be their masterpiece however was *Eskimo* which arrived in 1979 and was created from sound effects, created by occasionally prodding, hitting and plucking home-made instruments, and the bands approximation of singing in Inuit - the sub-text being a criticism of how Western culture has destroyed the religions and customs of Native Americans.

The Commercial Album arrived in 1980, consisting of 40 one minute songs (the band have since insisted that each song should be repeated three times in a row to form a proper pop song), and also saw them finally leave the studio and take to the road supporting The Mole Trilogy - in true Residents style the trilogy was intended to be a six

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part venture but only actually managed four, *Mark Of The Mole* ('81), *The Tunes Of Two Cities* ('82), *Intermission* ('83) and *The Big Bubble* ('85). This decade also saw the creation of *God in Three Persons* ('88), a story about the exploitation of siamese twins and *The King & Eye* ('89), a biography of Elvis Presley. More recently *Animal Lover* was released in 2005 and *Tweedles* in 2006 (*it should be noted however that this only touches on the wealth of material that is out there, their album releases alone currently number over 60*).

TotalMusic-Online did manage to squeeze a few terse responses from the email of Hardy Fox, but these proved to be as unhelpful and misleading as you might imagine...

Some claim that the band started life as a five piece. Is this true?

"I have no interest in disputing interesting myths"

Why does the band go back and reinterpret songs?

"The Residents enjoy contrast, and always make two or more things in order to compare"

Have any of the band ever felt tempted to reveal themselves?

"They reveal themselves in every work. Just as you reveal yourselves in your questions... not in your name"

And so on. But in truth we would have been hugely disappointed if such hadn't been the case as there is nothing so tiresome as an artist who spends the early years of his/her career eagerly chasing every column inch and television slot, and the latter years bemoaning the fact they are never out of the papers/news. The Residents continue to insist that it is neither necessary nor desirable to buy into the cult of personality and if art is interesting or worthwhile it will stand unsupported by reams of copy about it's creators sex life. It is the very fact that we know nothing about the people behind the masks that allows The Residents to continually reinvent what a 'Resident' should sound like or look like and to continually ask questions about just exactly what pop music is.

The new album *Coochie Brake* is out on *Wienerworld/Ralph* in February and a DVD of the live show *Talking Light: Bimbo's* is out right now (also on *Wienerworld/Ralph*). As is often the case however there are any number of other Resident related projects on the go and you can find out more at www.residents.com



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