

Backseat Mafia

A blog/webzine about Art, Music and Places based in Sheffield, UK

Not Forgotten: The House of Love, 10 reasons they are relevant, and She paints words in red

March 31, 2013 · by Jim · in Music ·



(<http://backseatmafia.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/th-house-of-love.jpg>)

Everyone can name bands that were brilliant, but never quite made it as big as their brilliance might have suggested. The House of Love (<http://www.artandindustry.co.uk/>) were one that I always cite. Singer Guy Chadwick (<http://www.last.fm/music/Guy%2BChadwick>) advertised in Melody Maker for people to form a band in 1986, and after drafting in an old friend Pete Evans on drums, German guitarist/singer Andrea Heukamp, Guitarist Terry Bickers and bassist Chris Groothuizen were recruited.

In the next 8 years, the House of Love nearly, very nearly in fact made it. Andrea Heukamp quickly became tired of touring and amicably left (both Bickers and Chadwick have since stated how crushing they found the loss). They recorded their first album on the Creation label, before being signed (for a reputed £400,000) by major label Fontana and recording another self titled album (yeah, I know-confusing). As the two main protagonists Chadwick and Bickers were both struggling to cope with increasing fame, expectation, pressure and a hectic schedule. Both retreated into drug use and alcohol, which in turn in Bickers case led to depression and anxiety. After an incident where Bickers chanted 'breadhead' at Chadwick in the tour bus, while setting fire to money, he was firstly punched and then sacked, to be replaced by Simon Walker.

The next studio album was Babe Rainbow. Although it reached number 34 upon its release in 1992, it was the beginning of the commercial end for the band. Walker was replaced by former Woodentops guitarist Simon Mawby. Mawby himself left after the next album, 1993's Audience with the mind, which again made little impression with the either the critics or the public. After Evans informed Chadwick of his intention to retire from the music industry, The House of Love disbanded.

That was it until 2003, when Chadwick and Bickers called an end to what had been an ugly split (each slagging each other off through the music press) and bonded, ironically over depression, with which Chadwick had also suffered badly with following the breakup. Pete Evans rejoined and Matt Jury was drafted in on bass (Groothuizen preferring to remain as an architect) and the result was the well received Days Run Away.

If you've never heard The House of Love, they appeared at the end of the Smiths and before Britpop. Their chiming, almost Byrds style guitar work and Chadwicks haunting baritone made them something special, and although he wanted to reference the Velvet Underground, they sit more akin to Echo and the Bunnymen and that ilk. Here's ten reasons why we should praise their very existence.



<http://backseatmafia.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/the-house-of-love-2.jpg>

10. Marble

Basically taken from a compilation album that Fontana put out to keep the money rolling in following their considerable investment in the band, and between the first and second albums. The song travels along, always building in a slightly threatening way, the atypical chiming guitars a feature along with an all to short searing guitar solo. Marble was the only single taken from 'A spy in the house of love' and it reached number 5 in the US modern rock charts.

9. Never

Taken from their first major label album, and at the peak of their popularity (the album reached number 2 in the UK album charts (<http://www.theofficialcharts.com/albums-chart>) on its release) it was perhaps the beginnings of Bickers serious misgivings that Fontana released this against the bands wishes. That said, the track is still memorable, Bickers guitar work fantastic against Chadwick's tale of love (never gonna let you down.....your heart is perfect, my heart is real) The sign of a band at the top of their game.

8. I don't know why I love you

The band was formed after Chadwick had been to see the Jesus and Mary Chain, and this see's faux Mary Chain octave vocals, but driven by this delicious chord sequence, and the guitars could almost be Suede...in a sort of 'who came first, the chicken or the egg?' thing.. Like 'Never', its taken from the bands self-titled Fontana album (often referred to as the Butterfly album) and, also like never, it stalled at no.41 in the singles charts. Really, what was the record buying public of the early 90's thinking of?

7. Touch Me

From their debut album on Alan McGee's creation (he continued to manage them even when they signed to Fontana) this is slightly more, well, c86 sounding but crashes around and this inventive guitar work resonates over the track. Chadwick's slightly melancholy lyrics 'Lightly hold my hand/Tell me gently where I stand/Put all hostility aside/Touch me' give the whole thing this sense of heartbreak.

6. Feel

Post-Bickers, post-success almost, and largely ignored except for poisonous critics, didn't stop the band from producing great songs, this one taken from their Babe Rainbow album. The track nods towards changing taste, while not being able (or not wanting) to move too far from where they were. It still has one of the best choruses of any House of Love song. Its peak at 45 on its release (1992) is unfathomable.

5. Days Run Away

It's always a heart in the mouth moment when a band reforms – should they have, is it going to be...any good? There was no need to worry with the House of Love, who bounced back after 12 years away, with this, the title-track from their comeback album. The chiming guitars are there, Chadwick's inventive songwriting still intact, and some neat Kinks-isms all combine to make you smile.

4. Destroy the Heart

If this doesn't make you smile, then I don't know what. Chadwick sounds at his most haunting and ambiguous, and it's just a fantastic indie pop song, the layered guitars washing over everything to create this sort of blurry, almost spaced-out quality. Taken from their debut album,

it topped John Peels festive 50 that year (1988) and scraped into the top 75 singles chart.

3. A baby got back on its feet

Taken from the recently released (and by recently, I mean last week) album on Cherry Red, it shows that the band, firmly ensconced in middle age, still have it. The voice may have just lost a little bit of its clarity, but Chadwick and Bickers can still write a hell of a tune, and the latter proves he is still a guitarist of stellar proportions.

2. Shine On

One of the most memorable guitar hooks I can think of opens this, the bands first single. It also signaled what perhaps should have been the beginning of one of the great bands of the era, but they just missed. Even on first listen it's still one of the most immediately catchy indie songs of the late 80s/early 90s

1. Christine

And so to number one. Again, taken from that early Creation album, and released as a single (it didn't trouble the UK charts) it charms, chimes, swerves this way and that, and consists within it the most fantastic harmonies. This, to me, is how perfect pop music should sound. Listen.

And so to 2013. The new album *She paints words in red*, is out now. We're hoping to review it as soon as we manage to get hold of it. The band is out on tour as well, so, no excuses, get yourselves there.



the house of love

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05 APRIL GLASGOW The Arches
06 APRIL LEEDS Brudenell Social Club
07 APRIL LIVERPOOL Eric's
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5 responses on “Not Forgotten: The House of Love, 10 reasons they are relevant, and She paints words in red”

1. [Little bits of Sheffield March 31, 2013 at 8:04 pm](#) · · [Reply](#) →

I had a few House Of Love records. There was definitely a buzz about there music at the time. People will go back to them and realise how good they were. There were quite a few bands around this time that flew under the radar. The Go Betweens were a great band but never really hit the big time although now are sighted as being very influential. I'm sure there are people out there beginning to see the wonders of the House of Love and nice to see them on your blog. I never did get to see them live though!

2. [mg April 1, 2013 at 5:51 am](#) · · [Reply](#) →

House of Love had unrealised potential – TB was important to the HOL sound and it's good to hear him play on HOL records again, giving them another dimension. I hope they can make a few more albums as She Paints is a much better realised album than then first comeback Days Run Away. Age is not important: it's the passion and creativity that count.

o [Jim April 1, 2013 at 7:11 am](#) · · [Reply](#) →

agreed. and thanks for reading!

Jim

3. [Painting the Town April 1, 2013 at 11:12 am](#) · · [Reply](#) →

It's good to hear Destroy the Heart again, I'd forgotten what a great single it was. I still have my vinyl copy stored away, bought from Alan Fearnley's great little record shop on Linthorpe Road in Middlesbrough

4. Pingback: [A Couple of Cherries | The Final Sync](#)