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Throughout the second half of 1987, barely a week passed when there wasn't mention in the British music press of a largely media constructed scene called 'GREBO', and the bands associated with it. Informed by an eclectic range of influences, from punk, 60s garage and psychedelia, through to 70s heavy rock and thrash metal and even dance music, bands as disparate as The Cult, Zodiac Mindwarp & The Love Reaction, Pop Will Eat Itself and Junior Manson Slags were all thrown under the broad umbrella of 'grebo'. But, two bands in particular found themselves at the forefront of the 'grebo' scene, whether they liked it or not. In this abridged and edited extract from his new book *Grebo! The Loud & Lousy Story Of Gaye Bykers On Acid And Crazyhead*, Rich Deakin looks at some of the key moments for these two bands during 'grebo's watershed summer of '87.

THREE weeks after Gaye Bykers On Acid signed to Virgin Records on 5th June 1987 for just over £100,000, they made up a 'grebo' triumvirate with Crazyhead and Pop Will Eat Itself at Glastonbury festival. Crazyhead played the second stage on Thursday, the day before the official opening of the festival. According to one account, bassist Porkbeast had clods of mud hurled at him throughout the entire set. Crazyhead singer Anderson recalls, "We hit Stage 2 after a long trip [to the festival], including being stopped by cops and searched. Fast Dick and I were on snakebites and a bottle of whiskey, Dick said, 'I've hidden 200 tabs of acid in my arse' and was promptly strip searched nearby! I think someone got busted for personal whizz, but I forget who, I could be wrong. There were about 2,000-plus people watching, mainly sat down, one of the best gigs ever. I said, 'Wake up you dirty hippies and take some speed. If you like us, dance, if you don't, throw things - we thrive on reaction!'" Anderson continues, "A few people danced, including some mohawk glue heads. Mud, bottles, cans - we were dodging all kinds of shit being thrown. I was being all pantomime yelling, 'Missed!' loads of times, being a cock really - huge ego on speed and booze. Then a huge clod of mud hit me in the face, and the largest applause of the gig went up from the crowd! Mic stands were kicked over by Dick. We came off to huge applause, pumped up high on adrenaline amongst other things, only to meet the head of Stage 2 threatening us, saying we smashed his gear up. He and Dick squared up at each other, Reverb tried to break it up, but the guy went for Rev and got a 'Reverb handshake' - a headbutt sending him down. He disappeared very fast. Then every other member of the stage crew came and shook our hands, and said he was a dick and deserved it!"

Among those witnessing Crazyhead that night was Simon



GAYE BYKERS ON ACID SIGNING TO VIRGIN

PHOTO COURTESY OF SALLY JONES

Pegg, not only attending Glastonbury for the first time but also experiencing his first acid trip too. Making it his mission to see "as many bands as possible", the future *Shaun Of The Dead* and *Star Trek* actor says in his autobiography, *Nerd Do Well*, "Crazyhead were amazing!". Pegg doesn't say if he also saw Gaye Bykers On Acid that weekend, but Crazyhead hung out and stayed to see their Leicester compadres play the second stage on Sunday evening.

The Bykers came on stage to Tom Jones' It's Not Unusual. Mary was in fine fettle, motormouthing as usual, and greeting the crowd with an ironic and none too subtle, "Hellooooo Stonehenge, yeeeeeah!" and launched into the countdown for set-opener Space Rape. He baited the audience throughout the set, throwing in references to Woodstock, and comments like "fuck the sixties!". Halfway through Tolchocked By Kenny Pride, which he dedicated to "every dead pop star that died in the bath, with a barbiturate overdose", he verbally attacked a couple of rock's sacred cows - "Jim Morrison was a wanker 'cos he's dead, [he] was as much a wanker as Sid Vicious...". Mary teased the audience by asking, "Do you honestly think what we're doing here now is going to ban the bomb?" adding, in an exaggerated drippy hippy accent, like Neil in *The Young Ones*, "like if we all grow our hair really long?". This could have been interpreted as a sleight against CN&D, the main beneficiaries of the festival, but it was probably more a case of drunken

badinage rather than any malicious intent. Sounds summed things up neatly: "Classic festival material (bored middle-class brats), the Bykers, embrace the stuff of psychedelic legend but kick the whole thing into cartoon dimensions and spend the time mocking its transience."

The band wasn't as tight as they had proved they could be. Hardly surprising, given the temptations frequently afforded by festivals back in those days. A group of skateboarding punks from Bristol (who ran a fanzine called *The Skate Muties From The 5th Dimension*) and friends of the Bykers, happened to be working security at that year's festival. They introduced the Bykers to numerous flagons of strong scrumpy cider. According to Mary,

The initial blast of humid air when we exited the airport was overwhelming and awaiting us was our white carriage - our very first limousine ride. That was quite something, hanging out of the windows and sunroof!"

Despite the Bykers' streetwise image and raggedy clothes, they still stood out like wide-eyed tourists. According to Tony, "We couldn't help but look upwards at the skyscrapers while walking down the street, a sure-fire giveaway that we were freshers, paranoid of all the potential pickpockets and muggers." The stretch limo was the stuff of any aspiring young musician's wildest rock'n'roll fantasy, but what expectations were built up by the luxury ride to the hotel were quickly let down by the hotel itself. Tony remembers the hotel

**"FAST DICK AND I WERE ON SNAKEBITES AND A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY, DICK SAID, 'I'VE HIDDEN 200 TABS OF ACID IN MY ARSE' AND WAS PROMPTLY STRIP SEARCHED..." ANDERSON**

the 'Muties' were daring everyone to drink the West Country gut rot. "It was pretty strong, so we got completely out of it to be honest." Drunk as well as chemically enhanced, the Bykers rose to the occasion.

Despite Mary's hippy baiting comments, the Bykers owed as much to their 1960s and 70s festival forebears as they did to contemporary sources. Befitting a festival steeped in rich counterculture heritage, the band deviated into elongated jams worthy of their Hawkwind and Edgar Broughton Band influences, particularly on the track, *Edgar*. Here, Mary howled and growled (as much in imitation of Edgar Broughton's vocal delivery as Broughton's was to Captain Beefheart), whilst Tony's guitar spewed out swathes of heavy psychedelic wahwah across an audience that Mary had spent the last half-hour insulting - who were as dumbstruck as they were in awe. Sounds concluded: "Gaye Bykers On Acid are boredom breaking out into brilliance and a parody of festival history. This'll do for now... this is the end of civilisation as we know it."

In mid-July, the Bykers jetted off to New York for a prestigious gig supporting The Cult, at the Felt Forum Theatre, Madison Square Gardens. Apart from Mary, none of the Bykers had visited the United States before, so naturally there was an element of trepidation. Tony recalls butterflies in his stomach, but was excited nevertheless, despite being "hungover and feeling shit on the way to the airport". Arriving in the US, the Bykers' manager had difficulty keeping the band together at check-in. To maintain their equilibrium on the flight over, they had washed down Valium with Blue Label Smirnoff vodka, and puffed away on cigarettes (smoking was still permitted — even on planes!). Tony recalls, "It was hot when we arrived,

as "a little shabby with cockroaches in the TV, and the air-con and bad [TV] shows were on all the time!" He adds, "The drug delivery guy reminded me of that scene in *Taxi Driver*: 'uppers, downers, acid, shrooms, mescaline, weed, hash, coke, crystal meth? what do you need?'... 'er, what's crystal meth? I'd never heard of it until then, so I had to try it. I didn't sleep properly for three days."

The venue for the gig itself was awe-inspiring. "The Forum was huge, very daunting," remembers Tony. "We appeared to be miles away from each other on stage, my amplifier on full blast sounded like a tiny transistor radio, and I couldn't hear anything the



GAYE BYKERS ON ACID'S ROBBER AND TONY BACKSTAGE, ACID DAZE, FINSBURY PARK, AUGUST 1987

PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDA KNIGHT



