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**RICH DEAKIN** pays tribute to the recently departed **Mick Farren** by way of his first, culture-defining rock 'n' roll statement



*Ptooff!* took its name from a Marvel comic strip as Deviants front man Mick Farren recalled. "As far as I remember it was from Dr. Strange... 'PTOOFF!' was in the original frame that started the whole thing. But as onomatopoeia it sounded more silly than dramatic and that suited us." So, bankrolled by Nigel Samuel, the son of a millionaire who had immersed himself in the London counterculture scene, The Deviants set about the task of re-writing the traditional convention of making a record.

The British counterculture had already proved capable of producing and distributing its own newspapers, magazines and posters. So, with more than a little financial help from Samuel, it was just a small leap of faith for Farren, who had already cut his journalistic teeth at *International Times*, to extend this to a record. Having little truck with the major record companies, nor they with them, The Deviants dispensed with the established distribution channels employed by the music industry and sold *Ptooff!* via mail order adverts in the underground press, and through head shops. Legend also has

it The Deviants were assisted by an army of street freaks who were paid in enough speed to keep them folding the elaborate sleeve and wrapping the record all through the night. But the myth surrounding *Ptooff!* perhaps owes as much to the artistic merit of its sleeve design as it does to the rest of the production process and the experimental sounds contained within its grooves.

The cover was designed by "Kipps", otherwise known as Pete Broxton, an old art-school pal of Barry Miles, the co-founder of *IT*. Some of Kipps' other work for *IT* had caught the eye of Farren and that was enough to get him the job. At first glance the sleeve appears to be a fairly typical psychedelic LP cover, nothing unusual in that maybe – it was the era of *Disraeli Gears* after all. But what made it really special was the overall design. In its full unfolded glory, it measured a whopping 36 by 24 inches – an explosive, colourful eye-catching pop-art fold-out sleeve in the style of Roy Lichtenstein, with "PTOOFF!" replacing "WHAAM!", it doubled up as a stylish trippy poster. A lavish affair then, it's no wonder that it became the perfect

*accoutrement* to many a discerning freak's pad at the time.

Not a single inch of the cover space was wasted. Kipps also provided a sci-fi style comic drawing that filled one whole side of the cover, whilst the sleeve notes were divided between The Deviants, Barry Miles and the legendary John Peel – as if *Ptooff!*'s cult status needs cementing further!

If The Deviants' musical influences – Bob Dylan, The Fugs, Beefheart – weren't always immediately apparent on the record itself, they certainly wore them on their sleeve notes, namedropping them along with a myriad of other pop culture and political icons. Displayed in a speech bubble beneath the LP's title and the colourful explosion is Tuli Kupferberg's loose translation of a Plato quote: "When the mode of the music changes, the walls of the city shake". They're still reverberating now!

How apt then for a band so at odds with the conventional musical sensibilities of their time to now be recognised as godfathers of punk, both in terms of musical attitude and in the proclivities of punk's DIY ethos. 