

THE DIODES

THE DIODES

THE DIODES



Here is the continuation of the conversation of the four individuals that started the Toronto punk scene from ground zero, the Diodes. Part 1 appears in issue #306.  
Interview conducted by Greg Dick. All photos by Ralph Alfonso.

**MRR: John: Is it true that you played drums on the single "Shoe Shine Boy/Killer Bees"?**

John H: No. I don't think I did. I think it was Linda Lee. I was around then, but, no, I think it was Linda. I played drums on the B Girls single and I played lead guitar.

**MRR: "On the Beach." Now, the Diodes, once they were finished with the 15 Duncan Street for rehearsing and your club, where did you practice after that?**

Paul: The Crash 'n' Burn closed on the 6th of August, 1977. The following week I was riding my bicycle by Toronto City Hall and I heard this band play and went over to where this band was playing and I started talking to this guy and there was a band on and he said "What do you think of this band?" and I said "I think they are shit," basically. And they were. And he said, "Oh, I manage them" and I said, "Well, I'm sorry for you." Just giving it back to him. And it was a band called Zon, and Zon were signed to CBS and were a rock band, and basically, he said, "Well, if you're so good, give me your demo." So I did, and we got a call. Ian and I went down there. We told them we were from the Diodes. At that point there had been an article in the Globe and Mail that said,

"Will the Diodes steal the Moxy's audience?" And there was a band called Moxy. I have no idea what this band sounded like. B

**MRR: I think they were like Led Zeppelin or Rush.**

Paul: They had seen this article. They said "Come and bring us your demo tape," and Ian and I went down there and played the demo tape for them. They said "We can get you a record deal." Seriously, this was August 6th, and on August 8th this took place where Ian and I played the tape for them. On August 12th CBS said they were interested in signing the Diodes. We went in and recorded the Diodes album by the end of the summer and it was out by the end of September. So that's how quickly it happened.

John H: It was a whirlwind. It was really fast.

Paul: That album was released, pressed, artwork done, and it was out by the middle of September.

John H: They had the tiger by the tail.

Paul: It is a crazy story, but it is the absolute gospel truth. This actually happened. The weird thing is the Crash 'n' Burn closed on the 6th of August with the Dead Boys, the Diodes supported the Dead Boys, and by the middle of September we had an album pressed. We had gone to the studio and recorded it and I think it was pressed in October.

John H: I think our album was out when the Sex Pistols.

Paul: Ours came out before the Sex Pistols first album.

Ian: Yes, it did.

**MRR: Would this have been the time when the girls tried to tear your clothes off and get your autograph in front of CBS executives?**

Paul: I can't even remember that. It could be a complete myth.

**MRR: It's actually in your CD booklet.**

John H: We'll have to ask Ralph about that.

Ralph: You told me the story about how you were at Nathan Phillip Square and you are standing there while this guy was talking to you and these two girls came up and said "Oh, you're Paul from the Diodes," and that impressed them.

Paul: No, it's true. I remember. People I had never seen, but again we were starting to get our name around in the press and these guys saw these girls come up to me and be very friendly.

Ralph: They didn't tear your clothes off?

Paul: No, they didn't tear my clothes off.

Ralph: They just said hi and stuff.

Paul: It was like, "Wow. You're in the Diodes."

**MRR: And there were executives there and possibly it might have inspired them to sign you.**

Ian: It was an influence or a confirmation.

Paul: This really got us attention because I think the entire Toronto music machine was running shitlessly scared. They were really running scared that punk was gonna come in and everybody was going to be made redundant. All the labels were scared.

John C: We had a fair bit of press back then.

John H: We had a ton of press.

John C: Mostly in America. And actually a fair bit in England with the Moxy versus the Diodes thing, and so on and so forth.

John H: Front-page article in the *Globe* all the time. I used to wake up every morning and read about myself in the paper.

John C: So it's not surprising that the girls came up to Paul, because by that point we had press photos. We had the stuff that was out there. We were in *Rock Scene Magazine*. We were in *Creem*.

Ian: *Trouser Press*. I think Ralph being a journalist by trade understood how to get press.

John C: Because it was easy to think we were the secret because we had this thing in the basement, but in fact it was quite wide ranging.

**MRR: The song "China Doll" was originally titled "Jerry Hall," why did you change it?**

John C: We were requested to. Actually, it wasn't so much of a request. Our producer looked at the thing and listened to the recording of it. I guess we had the initial recording of it somewhere. It's probably erased but there was a recording that said "Jerry Hall" and he goes, "What the hell is this about?" "It's about Jerry Hall." He goes, "Who's Jerry Hall?" and we go "She's this really famous model." At this point she was the most famous model in the world and he didn't know who she was, but because he didn't know who she was he thought this was quirky in some sort of way.

Ian: We should have stood our ground.

John H: We'll change it to Paris Hilton.

**MRR: You guys should re-record it and release it as a single.**

John C: Yeah, well, the original lyrics were pretty close. There was stuff about Andy Warhol which I can't remember if it's out or in.

Paul: Out.

John C: There was stuff about runway girl dead of nights but that was in the original lyrics. Cheekbone playing.

Ian: Yeah but if we get a release in China this could be good in the long run.

John C: If you look at the lyrics it says something about "Asian girl blah blah..." changed lyrics.

**MRR: Describe your inspiration behind recording Paul Simon's "Red Rubber Ball," a song he wrote for The Cyrkle.**

Paul: When I was 8 years old my parents took me to see the Beatles and the opening act was The Cyrkle and they did "Red Rubber Ball" and it is one of my favorite songs. It was something I knew all the words to so I felt that would be a good thing for the Diodes to do. John and Ian had never heard the song so I sang it to them and they created whatever "Red Rubber Ball" is about for the Diodes from my singing it to them because we didn't have a recorded version

of it.

Ian: But Paul Simon, at the time, is coming out and saying this punk rock thing.

Paul: We found later out that Paul Simon had written it and Paul Simon came out and said he hated punk rock, and that it was just the scum of the earth.

Ian: And a transitory thing.

Paul: Exactly. So it was appropriate that Paul Simon wrote our first single.

John C: As an addendum, I never actually heard the original record until sometime in the last ten years with searching for downloads, it came up. One of the first things I did was search for "Red Rubber Ball." I got it down and I listened to it and went "Oh my god."

Paul: What a piece of shit.

John H: What did I do? The way we play it, the last chord is actually a mistake, but it sounded so good that we kept it. It was supposed to end on a minor and we played a major.

John C: It's supposed to play an E and Ian played a G.

Ian: My fingers didn't make it all the way down the neck.

Paul: I think we changed the song and we changed the melody, so, therefore, if we changed the lyrics slightly we'd have written that song because it really has almost nothing to do with the original.

John H: Well, if your listening to the melody line I think Bach wrote it, originally. I'm sure Paul Simon learned it in his piano lessons in grade six or something.

Paul: Maybe it was the first song he ever wrote.

John H: But if you look at the line it is very Bach-ian, in its melodic structure.

Paul: I think the reason that was released as our first single really had little to do with us. I think it had a lot to do with the Canadian music industry and the way people thought of things. They thought nobody has heard of the Diodes, so, of course we couldn't possibly think of releasing one of our own songs. We'll have to release a cover version, which was typical of the Canadian music industry. "Red Rubber Ball" hit the right note for the music industry and they decided to release it.

John C: In fact, there are two cover versions on the album "The Shape of Things to Come," which is a funny record because at the time it seemed like an incredibly obscure cover to do, you know, "Wild in the Streets" with Max Frost

And The Troopers, but in actuality loads of people have covered it independently, all thinking it was obscure. You know Slade did it on their first album. We discovered that after we recorded ours. We were literally around at someone's place and he pulled out a SLADE album and we were like 'I don't believe this'. Later on the RAMONES did it. Paul: Did they? Well they copied us on that. Come on John we were doing it live. I had no idea the



RAMONES did that.

John C: Well I don't think they were paying attention either to the time of day.  
Paul: I think a lot of people know that "Hey Little Girl" is a typical thing. You know the DEAD BOYS did it.  
John C: The SYNDICATE OF SOUND.

**MRR: I remember Freddie Pompelli was in that band.**

John H: Syndicate Of Sound? No he was in a band that had a single out called "The Bubble," and he played it for me once, it's quite good. If you could ever get a copy of "The Bubble" single that would be pretty obscure.  
John C: Not Bubble Puppy.

**MRR: That's the French band with Plastic Bertrand? No, wait, that's Hubble Bubble, actually.**

John H: No, it was a band out of Philadelphia and they had a minor single way-back-when and they were pretty good.

John C: I remember and this did go around at that time. "The Bubble" and Bubble Puppy, that's a great question when asking the temperature. I do remember the story about Freddie Pompelli being in the Syndicate Of Sound.

Paul: But also the Barracudas covered that song "Hey Little Girl." A lot of people did it. The Viletones did it.

**MRR: I'm not sure if they did that one. The Diodes wrote about having fun as opposed to something political. Paul you said, "The Sex Pistols are purveyors of half-baked political stance and armchair socialism." Did you feel the same way about The Clash, who were also political?**

Paul: Well, The Clash were at least good. Whatever they did, they kind of brought it out in the right ways. I'm actually quite a political person, though I can easily separate my politics from being in a band and I've never pushed my politics on people. I don't know if I have answered any questions here.

Ian: We were political, there is no doubt about it.

**MRR: In the CD booklet there is a photo of you Paul, and Topper Headon of The Clash. Where was that photo taken?**

Paul: It was taken in London in 1978 by David Buckley of The Barracudas. We too were signed to CBS, by the way.

**MRR: Who also had The Vibrators.**

Paul: Basically, what happened was we went into London to do an Epic release for "Tired of Waking Up Tired" as a single domestically, so we went over to promote it and David Buckley came over with me and never left. We got to meet The Clash, I got to meet Paul Simonon, I got to meet Topper, I got to meet the guys in The Only Ones, I got to meet The Vibrators, I got to meet John Cooper

Clarke...all the people that were signed to CBS.

**MRR: What inspired you to write "Tennis Again"?**

Paul: I think that was more of a personal thing—in some ways growing up in the suburbs—it was my own personal statement.

Ian: Paul had an acute sense of class difference and understood what privilege was and what working people were. He brought a lot of that into the band; understanding what the haves and the have-nots were about. It was kind of a pastiche of somebody of wealth but he had a good idea of what was going on in that area.

**MRR: Television influenced your song writing as well. Tell me about "Child Star."**

Paul: That was written about an actress who was in a sitcom when I grew up. The perfect-family-type sitcom and the girl grew up to become a heroin addict or just a completely out-of-control teenager and she died of a drug overdose. It was that summer, the summer of '78.

John C: It was a National Enquirer thing wasn't it?

Paul: Yeah, it was a big National Enquirer story. That influenced me to write that song.

John C: It is a statement on tabloid press.

**MRR: I am surprised that CBS rejected John Hamilton's song "Burn Down Your Daddy's House"—they deemed it offensive. Wasn't that supposed to be what punk was? To be a little bit offensive?**

John C: I deemed them stupid and John deemed them...

John H: Well, the funny thing about that song is that if you listen to the lyrics, it's not really supporting the character that has burned down daddy's house. It says he is a foolish fellow. He's going to spend his life in prison, but I don't think they ever got further than the title of the song and realized it was written in an ironic vein. If they had looked at it closely they would have seen it supporting the value that they believed in but they were put off by the initial title.

**MRR: The Diodes debut was released on 8-track. I guess you were on the tail end of that time in music. Do any of you guys have an 8-track release?**

Ian: I have a copy of the 8-track.

**MRR: I guess when it changed tracks it didn't go into the middle of any songs like it would on a Yes 8-track.**

Ian: I don't have a player, so I can't play it, but I have a copy.

John C: I have the cassette, but I don't have the 8-track.

Ian: I think you gave it to me.

**MRR: Was WTBS FM in Boston, the first place that The Diodes received radio exposure?**

John C: It was an Oedipus (WTBS DJ) thing.

Paul: You mean in the States?

**MRR: Just anywhere, because you had a strong connection to Boston, Paul, and I was wondering if you had gotten it out on the radio before Toronto?**

Paul: Well, again, that demo tape that I told you about before that we recorded at OCA, I brought that to Boston and I met this DJ called Oedipus, who was at that station, which was a college radio station at MIT, I think, and through David Buckley, he said, "Oh why don't you come down and play it on my show?" So we put this on and he did an interview with me. It was a completely random thing. Then a year later, when the Diodes CBS album came out, he championed us and played it. We did a radio interview like this.

Ralph: When The Diodes toured the States it was the blizzard of '78.

John H: Nine-foot snow drifts and armed guards guarding Boston.

Ralph: We toured the eastern states but it turns out that as the tour started, it ran into the worst blizzard of all time. By the time we got to Boston there was a martial-law curfew going on so nobody was allowed to drive a car into downtown and we ended up staying at the house of the girls who printed the Boston Groupie News and while we were there, we had to take taxis to the club, The Rat, but I remember that when we were there, The Diodes went on WTBS. Oedipus was still there and we did an interview. Oedipus now is a mega-huge program director.

John H: He was incredibly supportive.

Paul: He then became programming director for WBCN, which was Boston's biggest radio station. He is actually personally responsible for breaking The Cars in America, but also The Police in America.

Ralph: I was going to add too that "Burn Down Your Daddy's House," that was when The Diodes were no longer on CBS. What happened was in between the first and second album there was an album called Permanent Wave, that Epic Records US put out, because they felt so bad that they weren't releasing any of this punk stuff, so somebody got the bright idea to do a compilation and test out all these bands they had ignored and The Only Ones were on there and The Diodes "Red Rubber Ball." What happened was the album had come out and started getting airplay on all these AOR radio stations in the States, by which time of course, The Diodes didn't exist anymore. I was working at Attic



Records and I was getting all the American trade papers and I was like "Wow, this is crazy." It looked like "Red Rubber Ball" was going to become an American FM hit and there was a new guy, Bob Muir, who had just started at CBS Canada and he was seeing all these trade papers, and he said, "Don't we have an unreleased album by these guys in the can? Shouldn't we put it out?" And so they decided because "Red Rubber Ball" was getting all this American airplay, that they were going to stick that on the second album. And because the subject matter of "Burn Down your Daddy's House" was objectionable, they decided to take that track off and replace it with "Red Rubber Ball" on the off chance that maybe it was going to be a hit. Then they tried to re-sign the band. It was this really strange paradox that ended up helping them promote this album, but we weren't signed to the label. That's when you went on your first cross-Canada tour. The legal guy called me and he threw this piece of paper at me, and he goes, "You should sign this and you should sign back," and we said, "No. We'll help you promote the album but we're never going to sign with you again."

John C: That was still in place the first time that we played L.A., because when the thing happened at Hong Kong Café, there was the CBS/Epic representative there and being freaked out beyond anything.

**MRR: Now something happened at the Hong Kong Café. Was that where there was a spitting?**

John C: It was a bit more than that. Basically, we had done the Whiskey and we went on to do the Hong Kong Café. We were playing with the Circle Jerks and Agent Orange. It was a weird kind of a night.

**MRR: That is getting into when hardcore was starting to happen.**

John C: Yeah. It was very early surf punk hardcore. We're getting along good with all the bands, but I am up on stage and I remember standing there playing and I am watching this guy looking at the beer sitting on my amp and you can tell when someone is going to try and nick the thing and this was the first moment. Actually, the first moment was them trying to abuse our soundman, but then the guy reaches for the beer. I kicked him in the head, this was step one. The guy jumps up on stage and he is this huge guy. He was like six foot five. He was tussling with Paul and I turn and took my guitar off and went to whack him and Ian got really freaked out at me because I was whacking this guy with my guitar so Ian is pulling me. Ian is making contact and pulls me away and then I lost the guitar for half a sec-

ond. Then I get hold of it and I hit him again. At this point, our soundman is up behind the guy holding him and there are bones breaking and stuff is happening. I am really whacking the guy. Then all the bouncers are onto him. We're off the stage. They take him and kick him a few times, throw him down the stairs... He then crawls up the stairs and starts pulling all the leads out of the P.A. So the bouncers jump on him, they hit him, they beat him a few times they kick him down the stairs again. He comes up again and he does it again. This guy probably has a broken collar bone at this point and god knows what else. Finally, they throw him and he goes straight through the plate glass window in the Hong Kong Café. Meanwhile, we are in the back room with the CBS representative who was just scared out of her wits. She has never seen anything like this. Paul: I don't think anybody had seen anything like this.

Ian: But this wasn't normal.

Paul: Meanwhile, not to mention that the entire place was erupting in mayhem and we were just thinking that we have got to get our gear off stage because it is all going to get nicked.

John C: Which we borrowed from someone else who we played with at the Whiskey.

Paul: So, we were like grabbing this gear and trying to get out of there. We went out the back door of the Hong Kong Café and ore down there loading and we had just heard all these plate glass windows shattering. The audience has gone out and they are smashing every window.

John C: This made all the wire services. The funny thing is, a lot of people were at that gig. I got something on my Myspace page the other day, which was this guy in L.A. and he was there on a date with his girl who ended up being in the Pandoras and they were at that gig.

**MRR: You guys ran into quite a few wild gigs. In Toronto at the Colonial Underground there was a gig there when you refused to turn down your amps and the bouncers attacked you guys with pool cues.**

Ian: I think the object lesson there is "don't play in a club where there is a real band upstairs."

Paul: An acoustic band.

John H: It was Long John Baldry actually.

Ian: We were just drowning out the whole place. I guess he probably said, "Turn those kids down."

John H: He was a guy getting two grand per show and we were playing for a hundred and fifty bucks per night. Paul: If.

**MRR: I know John was indirectly related**

to Sylvain Sylvain. I think his boyfriend's sister was married to Sylvain for a while. Rosie. Tell me about your first gig in New York City.

John C: That was CBGB's.

**MRR: And you still had John Corvette in the band. Is it true that your van was stolen on one of your visits to New York City?**

John C: Car. It is probably two stories in one. The very first day that we arrived in New York to play at CBGB's we were staying at this loft.

John H: Novo Scotia School of Art lofts.

John C: It was right around the corner from CBGB's. We couldn't get in so we went to lunch. We parked the car and when we come out it wasn't there. There were some questions.

John H: It had been towed. We were like these green guys from Toronto. We never understood that people would actually go and tow your car. You might get a parking ticket or something like that.

**MRR: So that is a story that has been twisted and turned over the years.**

John C: Well, we got a van broken into in Chicago.

Paul: When we were playing with The Ramones. They had stolen all of our bright shiny new gear that CBS had given us.

John H: Yeah, about \$5,000 worth of guitars were stolen in Chicago.

Ian: We've all heard about some incredibly bad luck that Teenage Head had along the way, but I have to say that this band had a lot of bad luck too. We had the winter storms of '78, all our gear taken, our car nicked, every place we played seemed to erupt into mayhem. It was hard being in a band at that point. Interest rates were at 21%. We couldn't afford to buy anything.

John C: Do you remember that gig...this was the night before Halloween in '78 or something...this was in the little bit where John had left the band and we were playing this place and people were throwing bottles and shit. I am wearing white jeans and I look down and there is a three inch long shard of glass imbedded in my leg sticking out.

Ian: I remember. Some people took this violence thing a little too seriously.

Paul: I think one of the good luck stories is the day we got signed to CBS we had just come back from CBGB's, for some reason John Hamilton's wind screen cracked. It was like a spider web. Do you remember that?

John H: Still is. My new car has the same thing.

Paul: We were all dressed up in our Ian's punk gear. Ian's is the shop in New York where The New York Dolls and all the bands bought gear from. We bought all this gear and we were all dressed up in punk gear in John Hamilton's trashed

car with broken wind screen driving out to sign our record deal, and we get pulled over by the cops. They sort of said, "Yes," and they looked at us all dressed in this leather and studs and they had never seen anything like that and said "What are you dressed for?" And John said, "We are on our way to sign our record deal," and I looked at the cracked wind screen and they were going to give him a ticket and they said, "Okay. Good luck boys." Now that's luck. They could have arrested us.

**MRR:** I was at a gig at the Masonic Temple when Iggy Pop and The Ramones played together, and at that gig someone handed me a flyer that was advertising a three-day bus trip to New York City to see The Diodes. Do you guys remember this?

Paul: Max's Kansas City.

John C: Yes I do.



have this sort of pop single.

**MRR:** You guys were also talking about touring with The Runaways and The Ramones during that terrible snow storm that shut the tour down. Did you guys ever meet Kim Fowley at any of those gigs?

John C: Yes, I did. Not in Chicago. When we first played in L.A. we had many abortive almost-went-to-L.A. trips. We were supposedly to go there with The Dead Boys, but Johnny got stabbed. We were supposed to go there with Tuff Darts but that didn't happen. It was supposed to happen over and

**MRR:** So did you get a full bus going down there from Toronto?

Paul: I don't think it ever happened, did it?

John H: We always had good crowds at Max's though. I always think of Max's as our club. More than CBGB's.

**MRR:** You guys did play at Max's and Wendy O' Williams, who would later front the Plasmatics, was the emcee

when you did a gig there. John H: She introduced us.

**MRR:** That was the same gig where apparently Lydia Lunch was sticking her head in the P.A. stacks when you were playing.

John C: Yeah. We love Lydia.

**MRR:** Did you guys become friends with the bands that you played with in New York, like The Boyfriends, and The

over again. Finally, in 1980...

Ian: April 4, 1980 we headed west.

John C: We decided to just fly out and do it. So, we got booked into the Whisky-A-Go-Go. We turn up there and we are staying at the Tropicana with The Only Ones. We got out the first night and wander down the strip to the Starwood. When we walk into the Starwood, we go, "We are playing here this week can we just go in?" "Oh, who are you playing with?" "The Diodes." He goes off, comes back, grabs us, whizzes us into the VIP room, like this is real L.A. stuff and go, "Oh, the management wants to talk to you." We go upstairs and there is this huge Diodes poster on the wall of the Starwood, but we're getting to Kim Fowley here right. So anyway, the girl who was the receptionist or the girl at the door that was kind of hanging around with us a lot...I think she was going out with Mike, the drummer, she goes "Come out with me" and

Erasers? The Erasers had Patti Smith's brother or sister in the band.

John C: I never knew anyone from The Erasers. We knew lots of people from The Boyfriends, lots of people from The Dolls, lots of people from The Fast. The Fast were the biggest band then.

**MRR:** "Tired of Waking Up Tired" was released May 1, 1978, and gave The Diodes a new start with rave reviews worldwide. I guess that kind of kick-started things again and

picked up a little momentum with the first album.

Ian: It might have.

John C: Little bits. I also remember "Waking Up Tired" came out between the albums. We were on CBS when "Tired of Waking Up Tired" came out. I can remember we were still at the rehearsal space at Cooper's on Peter Street. Do you remember the party the day after it came out and we were like playing the thing and everyone was just going, "Wow." All of a sudden we

she takes us to this place called Odyssey where bands would like to go and it is basically an underage teen disco in L.A. I think there is no alcohol there. It is like Rodney Bingenheimer-land and we turn up at this place and we are at the door and the first person we see is this enormously tall guy who she knows and she goes, "Oh guys, you have got to meet this guy. This is Kim Fowley." So that's where we met Kim Fowley. Coming out of an underage disco in L.A.

**MRR:** And did he know you? Did he know The Diodes?

John C: I don't know.

Paul: I am sure he did.

Ian: He said he was a huge fan.

John C: He was kind of spaced-out, so, you know.

**MRR:** Did Rodney Bingenheimer play your record on his show?

Ralph: Yes he did. The Diodes did an interview on Rodney's show.



**MRR: Does anybody have a recording of that?**

Ralph: No.

Paul: He playlisted The Diodes on KROQ. We were playlisted because of Rodney.

**MRR: Now getting back to the Phillips Building, you guys practiced there. What do you remember from practicing at the Phillips Building?**

Ian: The Philip's Building was early, pre-album building. Bob Gallo (producer) came out there. Isn't that where he convinced us that...

**MRR: So would that have been before Crash 'n' burn?**

Ian: After Crash 'n' burn, but...

Paul: It was a very short period if you remember.

Ian: It was our rehearsal space leading up to the album.

John H: What Philip's Building?

Ian: It was this place down on Laird.

John C: I think we used it as a pre-production suite a couple of weeks before the first album. I know for sure that we did pre-production for the "Tired of Waking Up Tired" single and demos associated with that.

John H: We did that at Cooper's.

Ian: One of the things I remember from that particular building is that it was full of bands. All kinds of bands were there. I know that The Mods were there at the time and The Androids were there. There were lots of bands just starting up and they were using that space. It was one of the only rehearsal spaces around. The ceilings were about fifteen feet tall. They were gigantic warehouse ceilings. I do remember that one of The Mods, or soon to become The Mods, was there when Bob Gallo said, "It can't be 'Jerry Hall,' it's gotta be 'China Doll.'"

**MRR: And The Ugly also practiced there.**

Ian: So that was another ground zero of getting ready for the next phase.

John C: Maybe we rehearsed there, because I remember walking down the hallways and running into friends of mine from high school who were in bands.

**MRR: March 23 and 24, 1978 you played the El Mocambo on the first anniversary of The Rolling Stones gig there. The show was broadcast on CHUM FM, the city's biggest rock station. How did you get that gig? Because they weren't the most punk friendly club around?**

Ralph: It was a deal that CBS Records had with CHUM FM, where they snuck us into that series.

John H: The big money-churning machine.

**MRR: And I heard it is about to be released on vinyl. Is that true?**

Ian: Absolutely. It is going to be released as soon as our production work is finished.

Paul: It has been delivered. Hopefully it will be in time for our...

John C: It is being released by an Italian collector's label.

**MRR: Now as we were saying, there was a hiatus between the first and second album. Paul, around this time you went to New York to pursue some movie projects, tell me about that.**

Paul: Movie projects? Well, I briefly worked in the press office of Paramount Pictures, so I guess that was my movie project.

**MRR: So you weren't starring in any movies at that point?**

Paul: What, like pornography?

**MRR: And John Caffo, what were you doing at this time?**

John C: I spent the first nine months of it mulling around wondering what the hell to do and then finally pulled it together and got a band together, so I had a band that had a pile of material that would end up being the makings of the third Diodes album. I was doing this with John Armstrong of The Concorde with a guy named Charlie Chacha in a band called Hot Rocks. We opened for the G-Rays at the Palais Royale and then did a week at the Beverley, and then, literally, the moment we started doing stuff and offers started coming in...and we did have a lot of material...then all the murmurings of CBS actually came out and deciding to release the second Diodes album came up, so it was a project that got put on ice.

**MRR: Do you think when the second album was finally released that the timing affected its success as opposed to an earlier release date that you would have hoped for?**

John C: It would have been better if it were earlier. In a lot of ways it was a strong album.

Ian: That was another one of those strokes of bad luck.

John H: I think we lost John Hamilton along the way as a result of the fact that they dumped us. John had another project he was working on and they had a record deal.

**MRR: Was that when John would have joined The Secrets?**

Paul: Yep.

**MRR: The photo on the second album included your newest member, Mike Lengyel, even though John wrote and**

**played on the second album. How did you find Mike?**

Ian: It was a straight audition as I understand it. He came in, he played, I liked the fact that he had a completely solid meter. He seemed like a nice guy. We hired him on the spot.

Paul: That's the end of story. Next question.

**MRR: Did you guys tour a lot for the second album?**

Paul: Yeah, we did a couple of up-and-down and across-Canadian tours.

**MRR: Would that have been the Circle Jerks thing in L.A.?**

Paul: That definitely is when that all happened.

Ralph: Just before the second album came out we were going to do something with Bomp Records and Greg Shaw, and he actually sent me a check and we were going to finance a single, "Strange Time."

John C: It didn't exist yet.

Ralph: Anyway, because CBS was releasing the second album I had to send the check back to Greg and that was the end of that.

**MRR: Now you guys must have had a lot of gigs that involved spitting. How did you guys feel about the whole spitting thing?**

Ian: We didn't experience a lot of spitting.

John H: There wasn't a lot of that at the Crash 'n' Burn. That was England or something.

John C: Quite honestly, it never happened in the Toronto punk scene. It never happened within the punk scene.

Paul: It was other people.

John H: The bridge and tunnellers who read about it in the paper or who came down and thought that's what they should do.

John C: It wasn't like playing at the Vortex, where it was just a hail of spit, just like a wall of spit that every band had to go through. It didn't really happen as part of the Toronto thing. It only happened later on when we started playing straight venues.

**MRR: When did you guys start working on the third album, "Action-Reaction"?**

Ian: We came back from our west coast tour with our new soundman, Bo Cairo, and we did an El Mocambo gig, which, in my opinion, was one of the best concerts we'd ever done. It was in the late summer of 1980 and we were signed on the spot at the El Mocambo.

**MRR: To RCA?**

Ian: Friends of mine were there. David Clarkson, one of the original Diodes, came up to me with his girlfriend, Elizabeth, and said, "I can't believe you

guys. You guys just sound unbelievable. I had no idea that you would evolve into this polished band." He just was gushing. My brothers came up, "Oh Ian. That's real music now. It's no longer punk music." And my brother was a classically trained flutist. Anyways, it was right on the spot. It was on the strength of that one gig that we got signed. I think we went in to record shortly after that.

John C: But there is a longer story about the Willie and Ian thing, because Willy and Ian found us at the El Mocambo.

Ian: That's where we did the actual we-have-to-perform-with-these-guys-who-are-considering-signing-us-and-if-we-do-well-they-will-sign-us.

John C: This shows how much anyone remembers.

Ian: I remember too having the meeting with Willie and Ian.

John C: It would have been right before or maybe right after the El Mocambo, but then something like two months went by where our people are supposed to call you and your people are supposed to call us, and one night I got a message to see Madness at the Nickelodian so I went. It was the first time they played in Toronto and I am sitting at a table with Willie Morrison, and he goes, "Your people haven't called my people."

John H: Sounds like a bank merger.

Ian: The point was the El Mocambo performance was the thing that triggered the album.

John C: And a mutual love for Chin Chapman.

**MRR: Did the single "Catwalker" do well on the singles charts?**

Ian: It certainly was played a lot on CFNY, and every time I went up north and visited friend's cottages it was on the radio. All summer long, all winter long.

John H: It was on the radio all the time.

**MRR: Did The Diodes ever make a music video?**

Ian: George Whiteside, who we talked about earlier, did actually produce a "Catwalker" music video of us in his studio.

**MRR: And did you guys tour for the Action-Reaction album?**

John C: Across Canada.

Ian: That would have been late 1980.

**MRR: You played places like Calgary and Edmonton?**

John C: Oh yeah. At that time we were old hats at that.

Ian: We were signed to the agency and we had some pretty good gigs. We opened for Gary Numan in Calgary, Ultravox all through Quebec, and finally we did Toronto at the Maple Leaf Ballroom through Concert Productions International. Michael Cohl got us there. He does The Rolling Stones thing.

John H: Maybe he will let us open for The Rolling Stones.

Ian: He said, "Let these boys open for U2. I think it would be appropriate."

John C: I will tell you a good story about Calgary. We used to always stay in this hideous hotel. I mean, this was like the most hideous hotel. It's like, nylon sheets and cockroaches and god knows what. People would go there and they'd be playing in Calgary and they would try to pull so that they wouldn't have to stay in the hotel. So we're playing with Gary Numan at the Calgary Arena with 10,000 seats and there are about 10,000 people there. So the night before, we go, "We'll do a test run." We booked a gig into the hotel we are staying at. This is the incredibly hideous National Hotel.

Ian: And who do we run into, but

Teenage Head.

John C: Oh yeah, they were around then but that isn't actually the story... So, we are playing in the National Hotel, and the National Hotel, for anyone who has never been there, it has a little long thin bar that holds legitimately 150 people. So they start letting people in. At some point they decide to do a headcount and there were 900 to 1,000 people jammed into this bar that held 200, it was just insane. They ripped the entire ceiling out from the back to the front. When we were playing, people were telling me there were so many bodies in there that you could listen to the jukebox at the back of the room clearly because there was so many people in there they blocked the sound—just an insane gig. Wild.

**MRR: The Wild West. At what point did you and Paul decide to go to England?**

John C: We are talking the summer of '81.

Ian: September '81.

**MRR: So you would have toured this record for about a year.**

John C: Yeah.

**MRR: And why did you guys relocate to England?**

John C: I think there was a feeling that Ian wanted to do other stuff and...

Ian: I mean it wasn't so much artistic as it was differences, which is what often breaks bands up. Literally speaking, you've got to realize that in 1981 interest rates were running at 17-19%, there was a recession going on. There was a terribly depressed economy. In Canada we went from commanding premium dollars down to barely making our sound costs per night because nobody was coming out during that dip and we couldn't make a go of it.

Paul: I don't think it was about making a living, I just didn't want to do what we were doing for the rest of my life. I did not want to go up and down the Ontario bar circuit and play these shit-holes. It is not what I wanted to do. It's not what I wanted out of music.

Ian: The Quebec and Ontario music scene was driving the Canadian music industry.

Paul: We went to Quebec and played a biker rally in an arena. This was in Temiskaming.

John C: That is one of the most memorable gigs by the way.

Paul: This was a great gig, other than a bad one, but seriously it was like the Blues Brothers "Rowdy" thing. We used to play "Born to be Wild" and we ended up playing it ten times with these bikers driving around us on their bikes in the middle of an



arena.

John C: Actually, a very cool gig. I remember turning up at that one and we kind of fell out of the van and we did a sound check, and the club in question was the "Ghastriders." You know they were all very cool and we start to go back to the hotel and they are giving an honor rally with the bikes in formation behind the van as we go to the hotel. It just gets a bit strange as it gets on.

**MRR: Ian, what did you do when Paul and John moved to England? Did you still play in a band?**

Ian: No. I had already been avidly soldering my circuits together and I got a job in the computer industry. I was right there in the early stages of micro computing and I was lucky that the micro-computer thing was breaking. I got a job in September 1981 and was able to have a very successful career within the software business.

**MRR: And Paul and John, you guys moved to England and formed a band with Jeremy Gluck of The Borracudas, called High Noon.**

John C: Slightly wrong there. I did stuff with Jeremy but that's a little bit later. Paul and I had the band called High Noon. It was a logical development from the last version of The Diodes because when we came to England we were doing a band with Steve Robertson playing bass and Richard Citron playing drums who was from Toronto. We did that for a year, came back to Toronto, then went back again. Then we started up a totally fresh band. That's High Noon. And High Noon was with Rick Zigman and Steve Robertson on bass. Kind of a very heavy band, kind of a little bit psychedelic, psychedelic but really heavy.

**MRR: Did you guys record anything?**

John C: We did a lot of stuff. We had a charmed life up to a point. The very first gig that we played was the Embassy Club in London. At that very first gig EMI approached me and said, "We are really interested in you guys. We had come to see someone else that particular evening!" They stayed for the first song of the next band and went, "Oh the Second Coming has come." We had incredible amounts of interest. Rusty Egan was really interested in us. We were kind of pretty influential at that London thing at that exact moment. It was an early '80s thing. But we battled with EMI and they put us into the studio over and over and over again. So we recorded a lot of stuff.

**MRR: Will anything ever be released?**

John C: We shall see. It all exists.

Paul: We have four of them up on

Myspace that you can go and listen to. [www.myspace.com/highnoon](http://www.myspace.com/highnoon).

**MRR: Do you feel The Diodes, in the Toronto scene, received the recognition that you deserved?**

Paul: I think we have now and that's what is relevant, that now it's appreciated what our contribution was to independent and alternative music in Toronto and in Canada. So I think the final result is important. At the time we weren't appreciated at all.

Ian: It was a bit of a tragedy, really.

John H: One of the things that I always think about is that it was the kind of band that could have had a 25-year career and we would have always done something interesting. It wasn't the kind of band that would have the glorified songs that you keep playing over and over. It was a band that could have gone on and developed further and further because that's always what we did. And it got kind of truncated at a certain point. I think it could have been even more influential.

Ian: We were always writing new songs, always writing new material, and we didn't let a genre stand in the way. We did pop stuff. We did all kinds of different material. We explored in the studio right away. We wanted to do new things all the time.

John H: We were a curious band.

Ian: We were very curious. We wanted to try stuff all the time.

**MRR: There is an incredible amount of interest now in what happened thirty years ago in Toronto. I mean, tonight I have never seen so many people just to watch you guys in the basement. Why do you think there is all of a sudden so much interest with books and photo exhibits, and such an incredible amount of attention you guys are getting, and the other old bands from that scene too.**

John C: I think it's thirty years but I also think the mechanics make it happen. Ten years ago it could have happened then. You could have had a huge resurgence and interest, but it didn't happen because the mechanics to distribute the interest weren't there. Now it's 2007 and the Internet is the most powerful media that could help to make these things happen. What's happened is that it has made it explode. 17-year-old girls in Japan are discovering Canadian punk bands.

**MRR: And I think half the Canadian punk singles are on the walls of record stores in Japan. Aside from the upcoming live El Mocambo recording are there any other releases planned for The Diodes?**

Ian: There is the Action-Reaction re-

sue that'll be coming out sometime soon.

**MRR: Will that also be released on vinyl? Paul: No. Just CD.**

**MRR: With bonus tracks?**

John C: That would be a lot of vinyl.

John H: We did hope to record some original material this time in Toronto but unfortunately just getting our gig together and re-invent the legacy has taken up a lot of time. We didn't have enough time.

Ian: I think we underestimated the demand for airtime and time for the band to talk to people.

**MRR: Now you guys just played in Liverpool England at the Cavern Club. How did that go?**

Ian: It was fantastic, we loved it.

John C: It was the International Pop Overflow, which is a big power-pop festival.

Ian: It was especially good playing with the entire Bongo Beat roster with Ralph, Ari Shine, Plastic Heroes, and Dave Rave. It was a fantastic time.

Paul: I keep saying it is like being on tour with Johnny Cash and The Carter Family.

Ian: It sort of brought back the feeling of the camaraderie that we had early in the Crash 'n' Burn, where it was bands just doing it because they wanted to play their own music and make it happen for each other.

Paul: Everybody stood there at the front of the stage and supported each other's bands, which I thought was a great thing.

John H: Even today my favorite bands are Johnny And The G-Rays, The B-GIRLS and all the bands from that era.

**MRR: And John Cotto and Paul Robinson you've been living in England for quite a while, so I guess you would have a greater perspective. How has Toronto changed since the time you lived here?**

John C: Quite a bit since the time I lived here. Not as much as everyone thinks. Nine years ago I think most of the things that people keep harping on about have already kicked in. It sure has changed.

John H: In '77 we went to New York to be in this scene. And now it is here.

John C: I mean, leading up to this trip everyone is going on about how violent Toronto is and I haven't seen that yet. I don't want to see it. Guns are an issue here now and there is a lot of bad gang things. We don't have that yet in London, believe it or not.

**MRR: Is there any hope that we are going to see The Diodes play again after this weekend?**

John C: Sure.