



STRAIGHT ON RED – THE STORY

IN THE BEGINNING...

Straight On Red is not a band born of a dramatic conception or perverse twists of fate (it's more like perverse conception with some twisted drama). None of us spotted another on a railway platform with a Steely Dan album under his arm*. Instead, the band's origins are somewhat ordinary – emphasised by the fact that 6 of our 8 come from Birmingham (arguably one of the most steadfastly ordinary cities in the UK**).

INEVITABILITY...

Some of this ordinariness was unavoidable – Mikey and Chris Davis (woodwind and percussion respectively) met because they share the same parents who couldn't help but introduce them. Almost comparably joined at the hip are Chris and the phonetically identical (but alphabetically distinct) Kris Chase-Byrne, who believe that outside the Davis family they were the first members of Straight On Red to meet***.

This happened at Hatchford Brook primary school in Solihull, where both attended a bullying workshop where they pledged to start hitting drums rather than other pupils. The bond formed over transferred expressions of violence was to be life-long (well, we think they're still talking, but they do like being at opposite ends of the stage...), and explains why they hit their instruments with such vehemence.

*although there's no doubting the considerable crossover in our collective music libraries...most of us have 'borrowed' CDs from others never to return them and repeatedly deny their possession. Mistrust is a powerful creative force in any band.

**'ordinary' is, some might say, being kind to a city where earthquakes been known to cause millions of pounds worth of improvements

***this assumes Tim and Ben are not bastard twins, separated at birth (highly plausible given a shared love of questionable heavy metal and the fact they both sleep with their eyes open)

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THE ROOTS OF AN INDISTINCT MUSICAL GENRE...

In their formative years, the K/Chris' collaboration covered a bewildering array of genres (many unintentionally simultaneous), resulting in the then parents of Hatchford Brook kids being exposed to unique musical experiences (many still receive therapy).

Their partnership was to climax (in no way prematurely) with their jointly written, directed, produced musical 'Rose' which premiered at Castle Bromwich Community Centre in July 2006.

This was an event which not only transformed the cultural heritage of Chelmsley Wood, but which introduced us to the living legend that is Tim Prottey-Jones (of which more later). Another less fortunate legacy was a number of (allegedly) 'underpaid' members of the pit orchestra, some of whose resultant legal actions remain in dispute to this day.

THE HAINES FACTOR...

As if the cacophony of the K/Chris combined beater-bashing was not sufficient, a third purveyor of rhythmic intensity was to enter the fray. Ben Haines initially learned to play drums because his mother thought it might 'quieten him down' (she was right), and the style he adopted from the get go was very much like his conversation and overall manner...incessant.

Because Ben was prepared to play with anyone, he found himself partnered with K/Chris at Lyndon's School's infamous Saturday morning music workshops, a programme developed by Solihull Music Service*.

It was here that the 3 realised that if they played together long enough, it might eventually reach something approaching musical coherence....20 years later we're still waiting for the day.

*effectively a cover for local government efforts to curb juvenile crime and specifically reduce rampant levels of glue sniffing in the Solihull area

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THE ADDITION OF EXPERIENCE...

All this youthful exuberance needed someone to give it discipline, structure, direction and the faint smell of urine. Phil was introduced to the K/Chris' s and Ben as students thanks to connections with Solihull Music Service and a surprisingly clean CRB check. Their initial meeting, at a Lyndon School session, began with Phil's characteristic late arrival, accompanied by self-directed, audible obscenities, the like of which the kids had only previously heard from their Head Teacher.

So began Phil's questionable (some would say corrupting) influence, although the boys did correct his pronunciation of certain profanities which Phil was clearly using to appear more 'street' (Phil being about as 'street' as Surbiton).

From this the band 'Juvenalia' came into being, the name reflecting the real ages of the students and the mental ages of the adults. Whilst its name and line-up has long since changed, its spirit of immaturity remains intact.

BRING ON THE BASS...

Rich Beardmore is a one man crusade to bring more mature attitudes to Straight On Red. He's failed. He has, however, single-handedly raised the band's mean IQ level to just below room temperature, as well as giving us our low frequency foundations. He came to our attention once again through Solihull Music Service connections (which really is to blame for almost everything), playing in another incarnation of Juvenalia, namely The Wacking Funkers, who's name marked a step-change in the band's cerebral aesthetic.

EMBRACING ETHNIC MINORITIES...

Up to this point, what was to become Straight On Red was entirely white, caucasian and Silhillian (i.e. from Solihull - not exactly diverse). The introduction of Tim Prottey-Jones changed our ethnic balance radically, as any band who takes on someone Welsh



will testify. Not only does Tim bring big valleys tones and prima-donna sensibilities to the band, he also counter-balanced Rich's maturity quotient immediately.

As previously mentioned, Tim came to our attention when he auditioned for K/Chris' epic musical production 'Rose' in the summer of 2006. Both were struck at the audition by his talent, charm and overpowering blend of multiple Lynx fragrances. As the lead male character in the production was emotionally unstable, arrogant, myopic and frankly a bit thick, they knew immediately that Tim was perfect and wouldn't have to act much. The fact that no-one else auditioned sealed the deal.

A FINAL CHANGE OF NAME...

The Prottey-Jones effect on Straight on Red was as profound as his performance in Rose (which the Chelmsley Wood Bugle described as "pant-wettingly profound"). When Tim joined in 2008 the band was going by the name of The Pat Mephoney Group, effectively being a 'tribute' act to the music of American Jazz guitarist Pat Metheny. Those aware of his music will know the role of the vocalist is important but partial, and Tim is anything but partial. Given his vocal prowess we started to cover early Stevie Wonder tunes and Steely Dan numbers, relieving ourselves of the burdens of too many notes and thrusting a remarkably shy (!) Tim into the spotlight. He'd like to think we did this due to his looks, but we know different*.

HOW EVERYTHING CHANGED...

This substantial shift to more vocally prominent music also prompted Phil to start writing songs with Tim's voice in mind....all were shocked by the fact that they weren't bad. We therefore began to forge an identity much more our own.

*his wife, Ange, is surprisingly fully sighted

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The band name therefore had to change and after much wrangling (and dismissing 'The Total Tossers' as far too brazenly honest and accurate) we agreed on Straight On Red. Taken from a tune by Pat Metheny and pretentiously metaphoric of running red lights (and indeed taking that challenging step of moving from covers to original music), it seemed perfect. The kind of band name a bunch of total tossers might choose, in fact.

AND THEN THERE WERE 8...

The last man to join our merry* band has also diversified us, but given he's Canadian we're not sure if this is in a good way. Trumpeter and Flugelist Nick Ashwood is frankly too tall to talk to for those vertically challenged in the band, so our understanding of him remains limited. However, he brings us the crass, North American sensibility needed to complete our juvenile jigsaw, and as many will tell you, he's quite striking with his horn.

Alongside the mighty Mikey Davis, they combine to form a horn section integral to our sound and a much needed source of pathetic double entendres.

TO BE INCONCLUSIVE...

So there you have it, the story of Straight On Red in 1300 words and yet providing surprisingly little insight. We can only hope that as we move through 2012 there'll be much more to reveal, at the very least in song, and quite possibly on a stage near you subject to local laws on public decency.

PHIL DANTER, JULY 2012

*in fact, one eighth gay