



BRILLIANT CORNERS: keeping their trousers on

Brilliant fab, gear

by Martin Aston

INFLUENCES: Alan Sillitoe's *The Death Of William Posters*, Sid James, *The Small Faces*, Ichiyoo Park and Slates by The Fall, Beryl Reid in *The Killing Of Sister George*, The Kinks '64-68 and Madness circa *Rise And Fall*. Themes: funerals, relatives, sex, embarrassments, domestic bliss, obsessions and the great Yuri Gagarin.

What more do you need to know? OK, The Brilliant Corners are from Bristol, they number five (Davey — singer/guitarist, Winstich — guitarist, Chris — bass, Bob — drums and Dan — trumpet), and by going by their influences, were right to call their debut mini-album *Growing Up Absurd*. They have their own label, SS20 Records (through Revolver). Mustn't forget to add Brian Rix to the list — what a trousers-down influence! The man was also the title for a single taken from the band's second mini-LP, *What's In A Word*, the video of which (quest-starring you-know-who-else) was broadcast on both the Tube and Chart Show. So at last The Public got to know The Brilliant Corners, and perhaps their new single *Delliah Sands* will double their ratings.

Any more facts then? All right, The Corners hammer out a judicious, jaunty, jovial, jilting and rarely jaundiced guitar-pop (and not so much of the obvious indie-tangle either); good songs and all that.

What more do you think we should be told? A bit more about Brian Rix?

"The song was one end of the spectrum of the stuff we do," says Davey. "It's a pretty piece of music, but it's not a pop song in the way that you'd expect. It's simply having a bit of fun. It isn't enough to get into the charts. Not that that was our primary aim, but the idea was to release an offbeat, out pop song. Who else? About thinking will our indie fans find that a bit odd? The abrasive guitar, but we got the abrasive guitar, but we got the abrasive guitar. We had wanted to get out of that little area and to do something that appealed to a whole lot of other people."

More information; things that appeal about the BC's are humour, their sense of irony, their live crackle, their lack of arrogance, their commitment to trying for something more than the norm.

Davey: "I think we're pretty adventurous for an independent group that plays pop songs. We're not afraid to go from style to style..."

"We've got boundless energy, enthusiasm and stamina," adds Chris. Davey: "And we're not afraid not to sign to a major for £30,000 and a shit deal. Also the art of lyric writing has gone astray. There's your Morrisseys and Costellos but who else? Groups are very undemanding, where they should be even more so, trying to find a way to keep their integrity while trying to get into the Top 30. I get terribly disappointed that I spend a lot of time trying to articulate ideas in a song and I know there are 30 or so similar groups to us who aren't trying. We haven't got the blend right on record yet but we're striving for it..."

Delliah Sands is another sprightly and articulate pop song which, not forgetting the list of influences, also reminds me of the slightly mocking, cheeky, sardorically elegant pop of the Monochrome Set. But there's no point in the journalist trying to portray the Corners — they already know what's coming. "I can see it happening," sighs Davey. "When people hear the album, they'll say, 'slightly eccentric English ex-coalminers' sons', and 'have they been listening to the Small Faces too much?', and these lyrics are a bit social but they're far too personal, let's have more songs about sugar and candy..."

But with every record and video, the profile grows and grows; a good theme and inspirations if ever I heard them.

ANTI INDIE



WHEN Davey Woodward, vocalist with THE BRILLIANT CORNERS, sent me a tape of their new single "Deillah Sands", now released on SS20 Records, the accompanying letter contained a personal perception of the indie scene as being synonymous with some twee, bubblegum, Thunderbird dummy, water pistols and candy coloured mini skirts... a lust for a sexual encounter with a 30-year-old pudding basin haircut chick pretending to be 16 and not at Oxford University! It was a crazy jangling of words cemented with vitriol.

"I hope you don't think we've got chips on our shoulders," he sighs when we meet face to face. "It's just that we don't feel any camaraderie with any indie bands. They're all so flip and transparent. One of the reasons we released 'Brian Rix' was to distance ourselves from that scene. You're not supposed to do chirpy songs and send yourselves up on video. Everybody was asking who is this Rix and why does he play for Arsenal? But it wasn't an out and out wack thing; it wasn't about him, it was about getting caught with your trousers down."

"The whole thing is to do with freedom," adds bassist Chris. "With us it's not forced, rather we're trying to articulate certain ideas through pop music. Still, the best pop music comes through against the odds anyway."

The Brilliant Corners play pop music, but it's not exactly pure and it is far from simple. "Brian Rix", the last single, was a superb pop record, an infectious romp, and "Deillah Sands" is an equally catchy combination of rhymes and rhythms. Coated with sprinkles of guitar and trumpet, it's a real swinger of a song. Moreover it marks a distinctive maturing of both sound and Davey's lyricism.

"It's about a girl who's very attractive, who embodies the good things in life which people think they ought to aspire to and it deals with the difficulties of class and how hard it is for someone of one class to have a relationship with someone of another. There's always this clash of attitudes."

Much of the band's influence comes from their upbringing on the large council estates of Bristol. While in comparison to other places in Britain it might be considered affluent, Bristol too has vast sections of the community who feel neglected and disaffected.

"There's that inequality which remains with you. Not quite knowing what to do when you go into a restaurant for the first time, not being able to read a menu, not knowing the differences between Earl Grey and Campari. The trivial things but they crush you, they really crush you. So we don't want to become a literary group, we want to speak in an ordinary language as possible. In that way, we really admire Madness because of the things they said in their songs."

"Everybody associates them with 12-year-old models," says Chris. "Things like 'We're those 12-year-old models'." "I often think that my words are too much of a personal thing so I like to change the complexion. Our songs are things which I feel strongly about but then I think of it really hard to treat it as a confessional box. I'm loathe to bring it all down to that."

This quality is one of the qualities which gives the Brilliant Corners an importance beyond most young pop groups. The mixture of romanticism, political and social awareness and the desperate need to laugh in a refreshing splash. They refuse to deny their background using their experiences as an inspiration and pointing out that music and sport, two areas in which working class people traditionally have an opportunity to succeed, are both being strangled by business concerns. The band have been offered numerous major deals but have accepted none because they feel that their worth has been constantly undervalued.

"They always say 'this is your last chance boys'," laughs Chris. "We've had about 15 last chances so far. They ask us how many 'Brian Rix' songs we can come up with. Do they expect us to work through 'Who's Who' I have you ever tried to find a rhyme for Gaidof?"

"I've written one about Stuart Sutcliffe, the fifth Beatle," confesses Davey. "I was ready to go out one night when I noticed that I was getting a bit of a beer belly. I thought that I was turning into Bernard Manning. I worked myself up into this illness and I lay on my bed sweating. I started thinking about Stuart Sutcliffe who used to get bad headaches and died of a brain haemorrhage and, since in our moments of deluded grandeur we often equate ourselves with the early Beatles, I suddenly thought that I was the Sutcliffe of the band and I was going to die. So I wrote this song about getting headaches and not being able to go out. I was genuinely identifying with poor old Stu!"

"To get back to the point, it's just that we're not going to accept a deal unless it's worthwhile. This whole thing is starting to sound like a mission. Join The Brilliant Corners, follow us, banging the drum. It isn't meant to be like that. Music is part indulgence, part entertainment and I just want people to realise that we're not a con, we're doing what we do best. Perhaps we'll get f---ed up and split up. I doubt it but you never know. But perhaps we are the Robert De Niro's of pop. Our drummer Bob got stuck in the bath the other day because of the cross on his back. —P

THE BRILLIANT CORNERS

What's In A Word (SS20)

SO WHAT IS the word? It's statistically meaningless – only two mentions in eight songs – but the numbers game is for mugs and employment ministers. This is 25 minutes of sad, silly, love songs, and I for one haven't had enough of them.

This is not L.O.V.E., expensive and glamourised, nor is it a widescreen romance seen through a hazy filter. It's an ordinary kind of loving, cruel, funny, malicious and inevitable.

"The saddest thing about it all/Is that I'm in love and about to fall/And I hate myself" ("Laugh I Could Have Cried")

Love is under a cold glare, with no shady corners to take the edge off it. The bright, brilliant Corners take their love straight up, thank you. And yet it always seems to end on the rocks. (Mixed metaphors, mixed drinks, they all go down the same way...) The beat don't stop, those trebly guitars insist on a sharp, clear sound, and that trumpet sure is pretty. Between tunes and words, there's no foothold for maudlin sentimentality. No space either for the satisfied superiority of a 'Too Much Too Young'. You could fall in love with this, but I doubt if you should.

Inside the grey confines of bad early marriage, doubt, drink and knitting manual values, the Corners detect a strong pulse that is the basis of a romantic socialism. From eight miniature stories comes proof that ordinary, often unhappy lives are richer in extreme than the pathetic lives of the extremely rich. Buy these true-life stories ahead of the other fiction romances.

Campbell Stevenson N.M.E

JOHN ROSE

READER'S CHART

MORE chaps from Chingford in the Readers Chart. Whatever happened to those goddesses who used to send in rude pictures of themselves, eh? And why doesn't Joanne Whalley send us *her* chart, tells us that, big boy! While we're waiting for Joanne, however, here's John from Chingford, who's 21 and was once told to "Ferk off" by Tom Robinson when he approached him for an interview for this mag at Canterbury University. Yeah, we've had the same sort of reaction from him too, John... he's clearly a stropky bastid. John declares a "penchant for jangly guitars and trumpets" (well, we've all got our problems, mate), would like the June Brides to rest in peace and predicts that Brilliant Corners will be massive. Next week in the Readers Chart: Joanne Whalley.

- 1 MEET ME ON TUESDAY, Brilliant Corners
- 2 EVER FALLEN IN LOVE, Buzzcocks
- 3 CITY BLUES, Misty In Roots
- 4 JOSEPH SAID, Wild Flowers
- 5 NORTHERCOAT, R.E.M.
- 6 IN THE RAIN, June Brides
- 7 LEVI STUBBS' TEARS, Billy Bragg
- 8 GUITAR IN MY BATH, Chesterfields
- 9 COLD HEART, Jasmine Minks
- 10 LEAN ON ME, Redskins

M.M

OF ALL the young hopefuls in the ICA Rock Week, The Brilliant Corners seem to have been knocking around longest.

"Two and a half years is hardly 'knocking around'," protests an indignant Dave Woodward, singer/guitarist and wordsmith for Bristol's finest quintet.

He's right. It's just that, with six records to their credit so far, if only seems as though they've been around a long time.

"We were ambitious enough to want to put out records as demos," Davey explains, "and stupid enough!"

The Brilliant Corners have made mistakes, but at least they've made their own mistakes, so far having managed to avoid involvement with any label other than their own.

"We've been approached by people in the past," bassist Chris Calvin reveals, "but we didn't think they were right for us at the time. Looking back, I think we made the right decisions."

Davey: "At one company the A&R man wore *jodhpurs* — we couldn't sign to any label where the man in charge wore *jodhpurs*! Until now I don't think we've been in a position to cope, we've been developing. Every wonderful pop band starts off as being a raw garage band; we're not wonderful yet. We're *quite nice*, but not wonderful!"

Confidence is in fairly abundant supply within the Corners' camp just

now. Their latest album 'What's In A Word' has been well received, with a video of the track 'Brian Rix' ('Sir Brian to you, mate') bringing them into our living rooms courtesy of *The Tube*, and now the band with no transport (which explains their chronically limited number of live performances to date) have now got it together to play 16 dates in (leaps) a single month.

"There's Corner mania in Aldershot!" declares Davey. "350 people screaming at a place called the Buzz Club."

Bit of a wag, this Woodward fellow. Woodward and co play a guitar-based pop geared to the execution of songs rather than the generation of noise, but this in no way links them with pimple pop.

Are you a jangly guitar band?
"We're a band with treble guitars," corrects Davey.

"We play songs," affirms Davey. "We want to put the songs back into *Top Of The Pops*. I think that, for a lot of groups, music isn't something they do as a natural part of their life. To me, writing songs is as natural as eating. It's something that has to be done at least once a day, like going to the bog."

I put it to Davey that he is *bolshy*.

"We can't be bolshy because we've had hard, tragic, terrible poor lives," reasons Davey, without the faintest hint of sarcasm. "There's not a middle class member of the band. But I don't see why we should have to reflect our background in a mundane way. The worst thing you can read in an interview with a band is when they harp on about politics and class, so we avoid that."

"But on the other hand, there are things you want to say about your background without being boring, so

TREBLE TOPS



THE BRILLIANT CORNERS in focus

THE BRILLIANT CORNERS confess to being "quite nice, but not wonderful" and a bit of a treble guitar band. ANDY HURT goes round the bend while GREG FREEMAN goes for the teas.

you find ways around it without using that dreaded word — well, two words actually, which are meant to make everyone feel guilty.

you've liked ever since you were young and who came across as really credible turns out to be Lord Hailsham's grandson.

So, do The Brilliant Corners have

a message for the world?
Davey: "We're saying go out and buy our records, because we're fab, groovy, happening. Gear — you get 100 per cent pop with us!"

SOUNDS 31/JAN/87

LIFE'S RIX PAGEANT



Last year, the Brilliant Corners were responsible for the classic 'Brian Rix' which spawned one of the wittiest videos of recent times. Now Bristol's finest are back — boxer shorts and all. **Simon Dine gets cornered**

You must remember the Brilliant Corners, they're the band who made you smile when you saw their boxer shorts on the video for 'Brian Rix' on 'The Tube' last year. Since their three minutes of TV stardom and much longer residency in the independent charts, they've become big in Belgium and a bit bigger than they were before in their native Bristol.

To celebrate this fact they are releasing the long overdue follow-up to 'Brian Rix', the glorious 'Delilah Sands'. With its 'ba ba ba ba' hooklines it's definitely a song to be hummed everywhere you go this autumn. So Davey Woodward, guitar plucking, crooning people's poet, why have the Brilliant Corners yet to scribble their names on a major record company contract?

"After 'Brian Rix' they were crawling on their bellies waving cheques at us. The problem is that a major record company will offer us 60 grand and that's no good. We'd sign to a major maybe, and only maybe, if they offered us a £100,000 non-returnable advance."

Bass player Chris shares Davey's distaste for record companies. "They want us to do songs like 'Brian Rix' and our more comical send-up songs," he complains. "We're not going to change the way we put together songs just because a major label is interested in signing us. We're staying as we are."

Brave words. But just what are the Brilliant Corners?

Well, their lyrics boast something rarely used in a pop song — intelligence and humour. The music jogs briskly along, guitars jangle like loose change in a pocket, the bass and drums like feet pounding the pavement provide a rock hard rhythm. There's a subtle hint of Madness and the Small Faces mingling with the charm of Beryl Reid and the humour of Sid James.

While the five of them fail to agree on the ultimate definition of their sound, the Brilliant Corners are sure about the effect they want their songs to have.

Davey: "We want them to make people never catch a cold; to make them be healthy."

Davey sniffs, clears his throat and then coughs for the hundredth time during the interview. The Brilliant Corners are perhaps the most sickly band in Britain. Every time I've seen them they've had colds, flu or varying

degrees of pneumonia. It must be something to do with the Bristol air.

Chris: "Our health is the worst thing about this band."

"I am quite unhealthy," Davey admits.

Do you think there will ever be a cure for the common cold?

Davey: "I expect so but I bet it won't work on me, I'll probably be allergic to the vaccine."

It's encouraging to see a band with so much vitality and optimism!

The Brilliant Corners are under no illusions about what's in store for them during the next year. They'll be gigging 'til their van blows up and sweating in the studio in their fight to be successfully independent.

"What keeps us going is the fact that we've always wanted to do this," says Davey. "We eat, drink and think music all the time. It's like an obsession and I would never be able to do a conventional job. We have a driving passion to prove everybody wrong. All the people who ever said 'You're just nothing'; all the people who came to our early gigs and didn't see the real potential behind the noise. It's just to say 'Look, we are worthwhile people and all of you who write us off are wrong.'"

Strong words from the band who describe themselves as 'all girls together in a lads sort of way' and would rather watch several rounds of strange trousers putting birdies than a lump of leather being kicked around a field for 90 minutes.

The Brilliant Corners are different and that's why you should like them.

