

Left to right: Charlie Charles, Dury, John Turnbull, Derek Payne, Mickey Gallagher and Norman Watt-Roy.



Back in the early days of the so-called New Wave, two fellas came almost out of nowhere with some strong tunes and a little extra putsch. One was a nastily little computer operator calling himself Elvis Costello, with an ear for the 60's pop tune. The other was a tricky bloke with a sometime cockney accent and an eye for the finer things in life. Mr Dury, none other.

He's thirty six. When Johnny Rotten was proclaiming loudly that rock'n'roll belonged exclusively to people under twenty (how old are

you now, Johnny?), Ian Dury had a single out called "Sex and Drugs and Rock'n'roll" that said it all. Most of it anyway.

Here's a little bit of advice  
You're quite welcome, it is free

Don't do nuthin that is cut-price  
You know what they'll make you be  
They will try the tricky device  
Trap you with the ordin'ry  
Get your teeth into a small slice  
The cake of liberty.

It was obvious from the start that this was no ordinary geezer. For a start he looked a little strange for the times, short hair, ducktail, jeans rolled up, white jacket, scarf around the neck. He didn't exactly sing either, just sort of talked in tune. It was different. And all it took to get his name heard was the "Sex and Drugs and Rock'n'Roll" Tour with the guts of the Stiff stable (Costello and Lowe included) in 1977, and some heavy touring in Europe and the States. Add in an album that's been on the charts for eighteen months and a number one single, and you've got a phenomenon. A star.

Young Ian didn't get off to a great start, contracting polio at the age of seven and spending five years in various medical institutions. At twelve, with metal calipers on each leg to help him walk, he drew the line. The choice was a trade school for crippled kids or a regular school and he took the latter. But the time in hospital had given him a different perspective. "I can put it into a nutshell. The only two fings that matter in life, one is tits and the uvver is prison. I've been incarcerated for quite a long time myself, that's

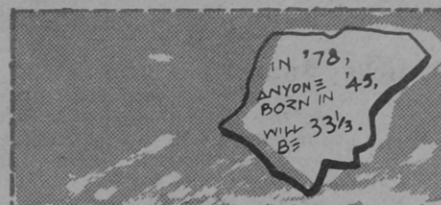
why I am like I am, a hard case. To do something that requires your concentration, it's necessary to lock yourself up, stop fings getting in your way if you're writing. That's where I do the fings that I care about most. Prison'd be solitude, study, and tits'd be all those fings which I enjoy, starting wiv tits 'cos I'm a red-blooded, half-cocked little chap."

In 1959 he escaped (did he fall or was he pushed?) school with three O-levels (English for school C) out of five, and started at the Walthamstow Art School. As Keith Richard could tell you, in those days, Art School was where they sent the bad kids, no future. But for Ian it was more than just an excuse to be hip. While he was getting into his art he was also taking in the British "trad" jazz thing and picking up on the jive talk that was current with the beatniks. An artist called Peter Blackie turned him on to painting what was important to him, rock'n'roll, wrestling, boxing and the like. "From then on I started going downhill or uphill or whatever. It was meeting Peter and finding out that art didn't necessarily have to be a refined thing. It was alright to be a bit exciting."

He can't have been too bad at it. He was accepted for the Royal College of Art in 1963, and he was later an art lecturer at the Canterbury School of Art. Even then, he was equally interested in words. "I useta put words on me pictures, right from when I was at Walthamstow Art School. I'd do a self-portrait and put on the bottom, 'Pig-nose and Pierce and Petty Theft', or 'Al came down from Cicero'. Just little statements. After six years I got fed up wiv photographic reproductions and I started doin' purely lettering paintings."

In 1968 he met up with tenor sax man Davey Payne who was then with the People Band (a fairly irregular 60's outfit), and they played together in Kilburn and the High Roads. This was a band more famous in retrospect than at the time. They were managed by Charlie Gillett, until recently the best DJ in London, and author of the most solid book on rock'n'roll ever, *The Sound of the City*. Gillett had the Kilburn's on his Oval label, but had never had the financial resources to get the band heard.

A key meeting in Dury's career was with his tunesmith, guitarist/piano player Chas Jankel,



From sleeve of Stiff sampler *Heroes & Cowards*.

who was responsible for "Rhythm Stick", "Clever Trevor", "Sex and Drugs", and "Wake Up", not to mention most of the forthcoming album, *Do It Yourself*. "I met Ian when he was in Kilburns — I was looking for a gig and got the word about him from a music store I was shopping in in Shepherd's Bush — and it really was one of those relationships that began with him telling me to fuck off after I'd walked into the dressing room. Anyway, he eventually go to hear something of mine; we got together, and it's usually me that presents the song to him for the

adding of the lyrics ... I have this riff or idea about knocking about for ages and I'll wait till something else turns up which I'll tack on and develop."

In addition to the indispensable Chas Jankel, The Blockheads are a bunch of individually talented musicians, not to mention being one of the tightest and most melodic units around. Davey Payne is one hell of a sax player, while Norman Watt-Roy (bass) and Charlie Charles (drums) are capable of being sold anchor men in the funk numbers, or providing slippery rhythms in the Music Hall numbers such as "Billericay Dickie" or "Clever Bastards."

Dury is an amazing performer. Not having the mobility of a Jagger or Marley, his visuals are restricted to a smaller scale. He has a brilliant range of facial expressions, from the leery sexuality of "Partial to Your Abracadabra" to the complete change of personality he undergoes in "Billericay Dickie", in which he starts out as an overconfident stud and winds up as a man trying to convince himself of his own prowess. He has a series of visual props, scarves, hats, brollys, you name it. He makes the *mike stand* work for him. He's liable to turn up with a black leather glove on one hand and a pair of handcuffs on the other, or wearing a pearly's jacket.

He's studied. His influences are too many to be counted, but they include Music Hall comedians, American comedians such as Woody Allen and Lenny Bruce, painters such as Artaud, musicians as different as Kurt Weill and Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and a host of novelists and poets such as Nelson Algren and Patrick Kavanagh. And that's for starters. He's into words and he has a sense of humour. "Funniness has always been a supremely important natural part of having verbal. It seems to be the main reason to 'ave verbal is to laugh, cos verbal won't get you very far if there isn't laughter."

He says he does it for the love of it. "I'm thirty five and I've been skint all my life but I don't honestly want a lot of money. I am tryin to be famous but what my motives are I haven't got a clue. It seems I can't prevent gettin' rich if I do my job the way I do it now. The main fing is to work out 'ow to get wot I need without needing too much."

"The activity of being active is the most wonderful thing in the world."

You can look forward to seeing a bit of the Dury phenomenon on the viddy soon. Don't miss it. His new album should be a little beauty, but take heed, neither of the two gems on the single ("Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick"/"Clever Bastards") is on the album. But you can get "Sex and Drugs and Rock'n'Roll" on the local pressing of *New Boots and Panties*, thanks to those lovely blokes from Polygram, who now make Stiff records in NZ.

Van Gogh did some eyeball pleasers  
He must have been a pencil squeezer  
He didn't do the Mona Lisa  
That was some Italian geezer ...

("Clever Bastards")  
With the amount of rubbish that sells in the thousands and the number of competent but boring bands damaging hearing around the world, it's sad that it takes so long for a diamond such as Dury to shine through the schlock. Maybe we just weren't ready for the man.

He's a genius.  
John Malloy

## STIFF'S FIRST LOVES!



Rachel Sweet

Fool Around

RACHEL SWEET

THE ALBUM  
FOOL AROUND

THE SINGLE  
B-A-B-Y

YOU'LL REALLY LOVICH  
... AND RACHEL TOO!



LENE LOVICH

STATELESS

LENE LOVICH

THE ALBUM  
STATELESS

THE SINGLE  
LUCKY  
NUMBER



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