

The Fun Boy Three didn't exactly set the rock'n'roll world on fire last year with their droll debut album and a series of singles, with or without Bananarama. It was sure hard to believe that Terry Hall, Lynval Golding and Neville Staples had once been part of the Specials. But now with a new album, *Waiting*, the Fun Boy Three are delivering what we thought they originally promised.

It's about a hundred miles from Coventry to London and two or three times a week Hall and co make the trip to check things out. It was during one of their mid-April visits that Terry Hall phoned from London's Chrysalis office. He was understandably chuffed by the new album:

"We're really pleased with it and that's the most important thing, but other people seem to like it."

He sounded as dry as he looks and blunt into the bargain. But going back, were you aware of the burden of people's expectations when you split from a band as revered as the Specials?

"Sort of, but it wasn't a great pressure, it was just a past which was easy to handle as there were no regrets there. It was no big deal, it was just like changing jobs. I didn't care what people expected, it was up to me to live up to my own expectations."

But with one album the Specials were virtual legends and it set standards. Did you feel that?

"Not at all because every group has their first album to live up to and no matter how you try to shrug it off it's still there, but it doesn't matter, it doesn't really bother us."

To what extent did you have the FB3 concept devised before you left the Specials?

"We had everything ready except a single sleeve. The original idea was to do what the Tom Tom Club did with Talking Heads, where two or three members would go off and do a project within the band but it didn't work out that way. We had to leave the group as there was a great deal of tension in the Specials at that time and so it was the wrong time to suggest something like that."

The eclecticism and direction of *More Specials* must have caused problems?

"Loads of problems, in fact that's when it all

"I'd call '96 Tears'...a classic, but I don't know of one in the 80s."

started because it was a second album. The first album a group does is always gonna be its best, not necessarily to listen to but in unity and feeling amongst the band. There's always something to prove and whether or not you prove it is another matter, but you go in with that attitude."

The temptation to repeat the formula of the first album must have been there?

"Yeah it was, especially in places like Europe where we were selling a lot of records and it was an easy way out. But that's never been our policy as you only sink yourself and you never do anyone any good in the long run."

The bands' integrity paid off with 'Ghost Town' — a classic that may never date?

"Yeah, although there was a great deal of coincidence in the writing and recording of it in that we had the riots here when it was released. But I wouldn't count it as a classic song because of the message there."

So what's your definition of classic?

"Something done by Charles Aznavour or Edith Piaf. It's classic because of their background and childhood. I'd call '96 Tears' by Question Mark and the Mysterions a classic song, but I don't know of one in the 80s."

Judging by the content of your songs, the

FUN BOY 3

BY GEORGE KAY

Talking on the Terryphone

name of the FB3 is obviously ironic:

"Yeah, we didn't want to depress so we thought if we gave ourselves a cynical name it would make us laugh. Other people take it different ways as they expect us to be stupid and childish and other people expect deep political comment. But we just laugh."

The band also seems to have the ability to laugh at themselves especially considering the poster and cinematic presentation of the reverse sleeve of the first album:

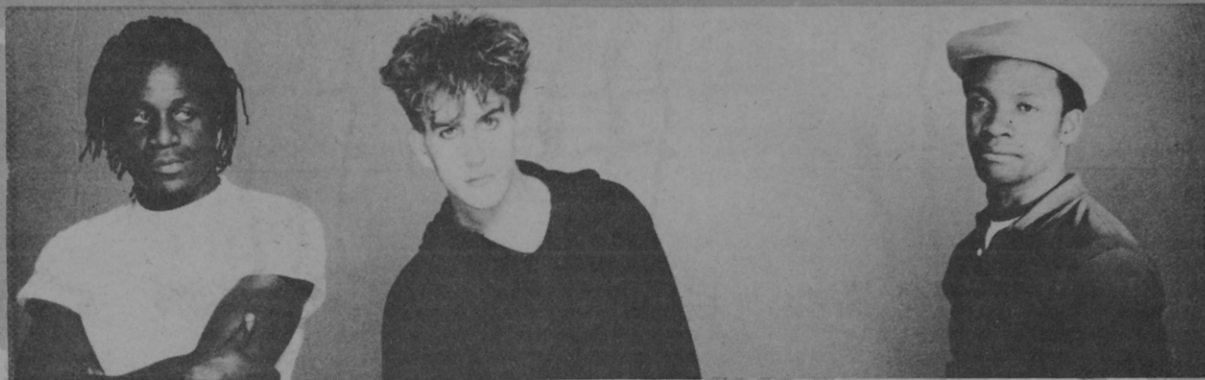
"We always seem to deal in opposites with everything we do and the idea was to try and present a super group but behind it we wanted to show that anybody can be a film star and

cated 'It Ain't What You Do' to the Solidarity movement and 'Summertime' to the slavery that still exists in some countries. It was to convince ourselves that our feelings weren't wrong."

Didn't you feel that you were disappointing or disillusioning people by releasing such limp covers?

"No, because we didn't say anything, we just released a record. We have never promised anything to anybody and we don't expect any promises in return. All we are is a group."

Sure, but after the press build-up of the Specials (and deserved) you can't blame people for expecting the same from FB3. Do you think the press have built you up too much?



that there's no big deal in being in a group and you can underline that. We disagree with things like stardom but we don't say that as we'd rather do it in an opposite direction as it's a lot funnier."

The cover aside, that's about all the fun there was on the first FB3 album. The music was drab and suffocating, a difficult album to want to play:

"That's what our intentions were. We couldn't care whether it was played, we just wanted to get away from the mess that we got ourselves into in the Specials where I felt like I was in the Who or something. I didn't want anything to do with that and so all we did was go into the studio and mess around for three weeks and drop ashtrays and record them. The first album was just to get the frustrations out."

The music had an African percussive emphasis:

"Yeah, we created the African thing, that's what a lot of people miss out on. We gave way to bands like Bow Wow Wow and Adam and the Ants and they won't admit it because they're far too trendy. We came up with those ideas before they did but we didn't think it was a big deal. We used to listen to a lot of African stuff and nick rhythms from them."

Dave Jordan's production on the album was claustrophobic, it was like listening to it through a wet blanket. Was that intentional?

"No, but there were a few circumstances that make it like that but they're not worth going into. It was a very rough demo sound and it wasn't what I wanted. After it was finished I listened to the album once and I never listened to it again."

But the singles from and after the album hardly made amends, especially the covers of 'Really Saying Something' (with Bananarama), 'It Ain't What You Do' and 'Summertime'. What went on?

"It was just another exercise of mine. It was just to test the public and ourselves. There were messages behind those songs — secretly I dedi-

cated 'No, that's what they're there for. It's just another job for them. I always hold it in my mind that without me walking into the studio there would be thousands of people without jobs and that's enough to keep me going. That's why I don't care what the press or anyone else say about me as I keep them in a job."

But what of the thousands of people without jobs who related to you in the Specials but had trouble accepting the 'Summertime' FB3. Don't you feel as though you've disappointed them?

"No, because I don't know them. How can I disappoint them by singing a song like 'Summertime', I don't understand how anybody could be disappointed by it. I'm not God."

Were you happy that you were doing your best when you recorded those singles?

"I was just doing what I wanted. Just because

"David Byrne and Jerry Dammers are the only musicians I respect..."

I had the reasons for releasing those songs didn't mean that I wanted to tell the world about them."

You're not continuing the Bananarama association?

"Trying not to, because there's no real need. The only thing we'd get out of it would be money and that's not a good reason."

And on to *Waiting*. But *Waiting* for what? The FB3 to produce an album that they can be proud of, or *Waiting* for Maggie Thatcher to be voted out in June?

"That would be nice, but if it happens, it happens. Everybody waits, the album could've been called *Breathing*, everybody is alive. It's just a

word like the Fun Boy Three or Terry Hall. I thought of it as it looked like we were waiting for something, but I didn't know what for."

David Byrne produces and plays on a couple of songs. Why was he asked to produce?

"I really respect him as a musician. Him and Jerry Dammers are the only musicians I respect because I like their approach and attitude. It would've been nice for Byrne to play guitar on the album but to ask him to come 3000 miles for that was hardly worth it so we asked him to produce it. Plus he was the only person I could trust with a song that took about seven months to write ('Well Fancy That'). I didn't feel I could hand it to any fool."

But he did play some guitar on the album? "Yeah he played on 'The Pressure of Life' and he played a ukelele on 'Well Fancy That'."

Waiting picks up where the great 'Ghost Town' left off. It's a marriage of musical styles from Lionel Bart through vaudeville to the personal aims of the FB3. Hall's voice and lyrics are the links, he's never been in better form.

Was *Waiting* hard work?

"It was once we got into the studio but it only took two and a half months from going in until the finished product. We had ten songs that we'd been working on for ages and they just had to be right."

How accurate is the rumour that you were close to nervous collapse in December of last year because of the album?

"That's what actually happened because I didn't have a holiday for a year-and-a-half. Anybody who works without holidays will end up ill. I've had a week off at home since then which has helped a lot."

"I don't wear dufflecoats all the time but it seemed to rhyme."

And so to the songs on the album beginning with the instrumental cover, 'Murder She Said':

"It's a song I've really liked because it conjures up a lot of things — on the outside it's happy but underneath it's different and it seemed to blend in with 'The More I See' because as a medley 'Murder' paints sunny pictures and 'The More I See' shows life as it is."

'The More I See' was released as a single at the end of last year and was greeted as an FB3 resurrection. It is a brilliant song, quite graphically outlining British responsibility for Northern Ireland. Is it a guilt song?

"Very much so, that's the only reason it was written. I felt embarrassed to be English. There's no solution but it would be nice if people talked about it. The song's saying that no one is concerned until it is on their doorstep."

'We're Having All the Fun' has three verses, one from each member describing, supposedly, his day-to-day life-style. Hall's goes like:

I live in a flat
I like Manchester United
I live with my girlfriend
And my cat we're very happy
I like watching television
Wearing dufflecoats and mocassins.

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COME OF AGE

For the time being
'Waiting' stands as 1983's first
major musical achievement.

5th Feb NME

WAITING

PRODUCED BY DAVID BYRNE



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