

rage and the person sitting on the speaker cabinet is Jowe Head.

In retrospect, the Swell Maps seem to have been a very influential band.

I think the trouble with Swell Maps is that we recorded everything far too fast, tempo-wise, but that was Punk, around that time everyone played too fast. And I've got tapes of Swell Maps before punk happened, we played the songs at a lot better speed. We did two reunion concerts this year, as tribute concerts for my brother, one in London and one in Berlin. On the first one, it was myself, Jowe Head and John Cockrill, and Richard Earl came to the concert, but he refused to play, he said he came to kind of laugh at it on Epic's behalf. But as soon as I played the first chord of 'Vertical Slum' he thought 'Wow, that's brilliant' so he played at the Berlin Gig, and I was playing the songs at the tempo I play them now, and he said 'What are you doing, why aren't you playing at the right speed?', and I said 'Well, it sounds too fast' and he said 'No it doesn't' and it was very strange, since we had different attitudes to it. Epic and myself always thought the Swell Maps records far too fast... that's one of the troubles... and some of the singing is appalling, but that's something you learn to live with. Some of it is so out of tune... but that's my fault, I was the singer.

Was your first solo LP recorded while the Maps were still in existence?

No, 'Forest Fire' and 'New York' were two Swell Maps outtakes, and the rest of the album was recorded in mid-1980, I think. Swell Maps broke up in March 1980... No, my first solo-album must have been recorded in 1981, because I was sitting around for a year doing nothing and then I got a big royalty-cheque, and someone said 'Why don't you go and make another album?', so I thought 'OK', so I went and did it, and that was the start of my solo-career!

And why did the Swell Maps break up? Was there any specific reason?

Musical differences (laughs). It's such a cliché, but it's true. At the time they said that I wanted to go too Rock'n'Roll, and they wanted to become more experimental. And I thought it was working fine at the time. 'Jane from Occupied Europe' is a lot better than the first album, and the band was getting better, though it was getting a bit fractured... I think Epic wrote it best on the sleeve-notes to 'Collision Time Revisited', the American album, "We grew up together but we grew apart". Epic and I ended up playing the same sort of music anyway. I hadn't even seen Richard - the other Swell Maps guitar player - for fifteen years, till Epic died. He came to the funeral, I didn't see him there, but then he came when I was in the studio in Leamington Spa. He came over to the studio and it was like one day had gone by since we'd seen each other, not fifteen years, one day, it was a brilliant... so we're really close friends again now. That's one of the strangest things about death: it brings people closer together.

You recorded a song for a French 'Tribute to the Boys' LP. Did you wholly embrace Punk and its philosophy when it started?

I don't know about the philosophy (laughter). Punk was great fun when it started; in 1975 I was living in London, and there was one, maybe two concerts' a month worth going to see, and then Punk happened and there were great concerts to see every day, and there was great singles to buy every week, and it was just really an exhilarating kind of time in retrospect. I mean, most of the Punk bands I can't listen to at all: I like the Pistols, the Clash, the Boys, the Adverts, but not many others. Johnny Thunders is my favourite person from that era. I don't count The Heartbreakers and Johnny Thunders as a part of the Punk scene though, that's American Rock'n'Roll.

You also met him.

Yes, I did an interview with him for Zig-Zag in 1980 in New York. There was a photo of him in the NME one week sitting on a fire hydrant or something in New York and I thought, "I gotta go to New York". Actually, Swell Maps were supposed to play in America, but we broke up before that happened, and so I wanted to go to New York anyway, just to go and see Johnny Thunders. So I got off the plane, I went to these people's place where I'm staying and I say "Is there anything happening tonight?" "Oh, the Heartbreakers are playing". So I went to see them within an hour of getting to New York. And Johnny didn't even come on stage for the first two songs, he was so out of it. But it was a brilliant concert.

But you never recorded together?

No, one time in Los Angeles he asked me if I would get up and do some songs with him at this gig he did at a club called 'English Acid', but he forgot about it, so I never did. We did sit down and play guitar together one night, but nothing ever came of it.

Another person that obviously had a big influence on your musical career was Dave Kusworth.

He still is. He had a band called 'The Subterranean Hawks' with Stephen 'Tintin' Duffy from the Lilac Times who was originally the singer with Duran Duran. Anyway, Steve and the drummer Dave Twist, who now designs the Jacobites' covers, came in to Rough Trade records, where I was working at that time, with a demo tape, and I thought they looked really cool, so I asked to hear the tape, and they played it to me and I thought it was brilliant. They didn't get signed, of course. At that time they were living in Birmingham, so every time I went to Birmingham I popped in to see them and got friendly with Kusworth. I said if the Hawks ever broke up we should form a band together, and he said fine. So they broke up one day and I went round to his house next week with my guitar and that was the Jacobites. As easy as that.

How long did it take from that to the recording of the first LP?

I started recording the 'Jacobites' LP before we'd even got the band together. Dave had already played on 'The Bible Belt', my second solo-album. I recorded 'Big Store' from 'The Jacobites' as a solo track, and Dave just came in and put on the lead guitar solo at the end. And I remember thinking that he was such a good songwriter and that no one knew him at all, so I should get him to do half his songs and half of my songs on the album, so we just did it like that. and it turned into a band of sorts. At the moment, the Jacobites is down to Kusworth and me again, 'cause the rest of the band all left. We're doing a West Coast American tour next year, just with a pick-up bass and drummer, which should be fun, as long as I can get Kusworth through immigration. Twelve to fourteen hours from Birmingham to Los Angeles with free drinks, I don't know how I'm gonna do it. Plus the fact that you can't even smoke on the airlines these days. I think he's gonna go crazy.

Why did the Jacobites split up in 1986?

We played our last gig together on January 2nd, 1986 at the Outrigger in Birmingham (our first show was July 2nd, 1982 at the Royal George in Birmingham - about 200 yards down the road). We had a European tour booked for February. I went to Hamburg airport to meet Kusworth and bass player Duncan Sibbald. Dave didn't arrive. He never turned up. The next time I saw him was while I was recording 'Texas'.

Who initiated the Jacobites' reunion?

A chap called Carlton Sandercock from Trident Music approached me to see if Trident could reissue 'Jacobites' and 'Robespierre'. I contacted David and we met up with Carlton and agreed to the project - i.e. the reissue of 'Robespierre' as the double album it was originally planned as. Carlton asked if we'd be prepared to play three shows to promote the albums. I said that I wouldn't be interested in doing a mere nostalgia show and that I'd only be interested if we did some new songs as well. Dave and I sat down at a friend's place one night and came up with 'Don't You Ever Leave Me'. As with the 'Jacobites' album we went into the studio to record an EP, and once again we ended up with a complete album, which came out as 'Howling Good Times'.

About your new LP, Red Brocade: Somebody compared it to 'Texas', so I guess it will be a slower, softer kind of recording?

It's my most romantic album ever. It starts with a fast song, and then there's a song called 'Broken Door' which I'll play tonight, and then there's a song a bit like 'Miss you' or 'Emotional rescue' by the Stones with a drum beat like 'Do ya think I'm sexy' by Rod Stewart. No one's done that drum-beat for years, so I just tried it (imitates the drum-beat). Anyway, it's basically about this girl I met from Tübingen

called Katarina I fell madly in love with the day before I went to America to make the album. When I went to America, I had two or three songs written, and I wrote the rest on the spot all about her. I spent about seven hundred dollars on phone calls back to her. And she's in St. Petersburg now, which is of no use at all to me.

I heard that you felt as if you were about to die while recording it.

Yes, I did. I don't know what it was, it must have been something I had eaten the first day I got to Chicago. I couldn't eat anything for the next week, all I could drink was rice-milk. And we had to do this take, and we did three or four takes, and I thought 'This is gotta be the one'. I thought I could actually die that night, and I thought, 'This could be the last time I ever record in my life, so it's gotta be perfect'.

I tried to work out your discography, but it turned out to be quite a major task. Can you still recall all the records you played on?

