

"Strange Fruit" is the record label currently flooding the independent music market with versions of your favourite songs previously unheard to those of us not lucky enough to be able to catch BBC radio one's "John Peel Show". In an unashamed move of plagiarism **ENTER-TAINMENT** filches excerpts from a recent **NME** article tracing the origins of the concept and a complete discography of material currently available.

PEELING STRANGE FRUIT

"Right from the start I decided that it would be a good idea to release the sessions," says John Peel, "but the whiff of commerce didn't appeal to the BBC at all. They were more interested in records like "Great Wimbledon Heroes", or "Letters to Winston Churchill By A Lady Of Leisure", and there was even a record of advice to people who wished to grow particular kinds of roses.

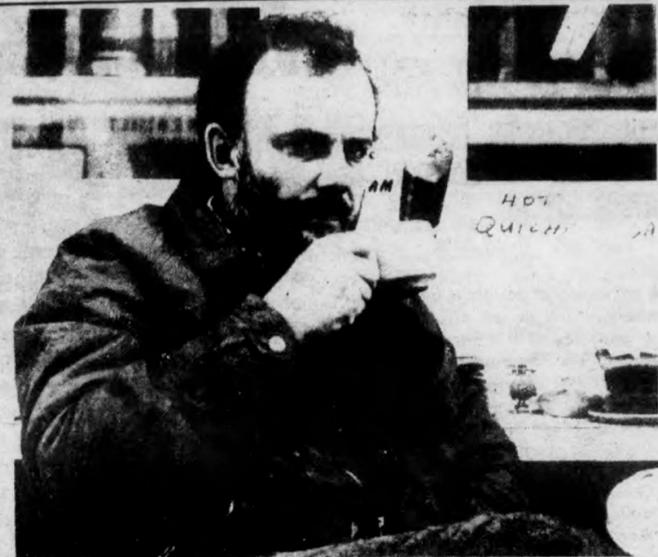
The history of the Peel Session EPs is a fraught one. Now the streets are filled with them; currently over 100 singles that range from the one minute blurts of the Electro Hippies to Robert Wyatt's eight minute musings, from stately New Order sessions and unaccompanied June Tabor songs to the raucous early days of The Damned and a young electric T Rex. We almost take for granted the fact that nowadays one can buy music that was previously only available by late night taping sessions or market stall bootleg cassettes, but in the misty old days of the Light Pro-

gramme, the Peel Session was a fraught bloom.

"What BBC sessions meant at the beginning was that people who had been demobbed from the war and who had learnt to play the trumpet in a pit orchestra in Warrington would be guaranteed employment in the Northern Dance Orchestra or something," recalls Peel, "I particularly remember with something approaching affection a version of the Northern Dance Orchestra had done of a Jimi Hendrix song which was quite wonderful. . . . When it came to the guitar solo, the guitarist obviously decided that the best way to approximate Hendrix's style was to drop the guitar down a flight of stairs."

So the 70's passed without Peel's Hendrix, Cream, Bonzo Dog and Pink Floyd sessions appearing on record. Then in 1971 John Peel decided to approach Richard Branson.

"I went along to Richard Branson but he seemed more interested in an engagement he had with his father; they were going to go out and lay waste



SIR JOHN PEEL ENJOYS A HOME-LY CUPPA AT HIS MANSION IN ESSEX.

to vast quantities of wild creatures. So the idea never really got off the ground . . . For about ten years I rather gave up on the idea until Clive and Shirley

elwood said they would establish the Strange Fruit label."

Clive and Shirley Selwood, man and wife, are respectively Peel's former manager and Peel's current manager. Clive first came across John in the mid-70s as head of Elektra Records in the UK and therefore was the man responsible for giving us Love and The Doors. Selwood approached Peel and John Walters with the idea of bringing out the sessions and they said yes.

"And after a year, BBC Records gave us approval."

Clive Selwood adds, "Me and John got together and picked out the, er, first division sessions and I've been wending my way through a pile of about a hundred groups ever since. And for every session you bring out, you have to find every member of the band on it, owing to the nature of the agreements, and then you have to go back to the record company. And - sessions means - individual contracts, and every release means a few dozen signatures. . . ."

Peel's involvement is more to do with choosing material; his incentive for releasing the sessions is moral rather than historical. Clive says of him, "He's more interested in tomorrow's music than yesterday's."

The Peel sessions contain looser versions of familiar tunes, insane rambles and a great deal of oddness. Who can forget, once having heard them, The Undertones' impressions of blustery gales of "Here Come The Summer", Linton Kwesi Johnson's unaccompanied poetry session, and The Cure's quite amazing song, "Desperate Journalist in On-Going Review Situation"?

Not me for a kick-off. Then there are the bands who people just collect for different and unreleased product. New Order's two sessions have sold about 10,000 copies on this basis, which makes them the flagship of Strange Fruit.

Clive Selwood: "New Order are the ideal band, popular but with credibility. I'm very anti-street cred, but that band has it and it's reflected in the sales. Credibility's actually more important to our sales than a past chart record - XMal Deutschland sell as well as Madness do. And we broke our asses trying to get Siouxsie And the Banshees; we were very wound up in their success, we'd recorded them a year before they got a record deal, and they touted that session about to get the deal, we went through enormous difficulties getting the two members who had left, all that. . . and it didn't sell well."

The repertoire must be a salesman's nightmare. Strange Fruit release things like Twa Toots and Electro Hippies, but don't put out The Jesus And Mary Chain, David Bowie or Jimi Hendrix. Worst of all, some megabands didn't even get offered sessions. . . .

John Peel says with perverse joy: "Some bands we've recorded have gone on to considerable fame -- Simple Minds are one name. Other I'm quite proud I turned down, like Dire Straits and U2. I felt what they were doing wasn't quite interesting or innovative enough."

- 10.5.77 DAMNED
SICK OF BEING SICK/STRETCHER CASE/FAN CLUB
FEEL THE PAIN (SFPS002)
- 24.7.84 SCREAMING BLUE MESSIAHS
GOOD AND GONE/SOMEONE TO TALK TO/
TRACKING THE DOG/LET'S GO DOWN TO THE
WOODS AND PRAY (SFPS003)
- 12.9.78 STIFF LITTLE FINGERS
JOHNNY WAS/LAW AND ORDER/BARBED WIRES/
SUSPECT DEVISE (SFPS004)
- 16.11.83 SUDDEN SWAY
LET'S EVOLVE/RELATIONSHIP (SFPS005)
- 1.5.82 WILD SWANS
NO BLEEDING/ENCHANTED/THIRST (SFPS006)
- 27.8.79 MADNESS
THE PRINCE/BED AND BREAKFAST MAN/LAND
OF HOPE AND GLORY/STEPPING INTO LINE (SFPS007)
- 18.1.79 GANG OF FOUR
I FOUND THAT ESSENCE RARE/RETURN THE
GIFT/5.45/AT HOME HE'S A TOURIST (SFPS008)
- 26.1.86 THE WEDDING PRESENT
FELICITY/WHAT BECOMES OF THE BROKEN
HEARTED/YOU SHOULD ALWAYS KEEP IN TOUCH
THIS BOY ERASER (SFPS009)
- 31.10.83 TWA TOOTS
A NEW DEPRESSION/YO-YO/PLEASE DON'T PLAY
A RAINY NIGHT IN GEORGIA/IT'S A LOVELY DAY (SFPS010)
- 21.5.79 THE RUTS
SUS/SOCIETY/YOU'RE JUST A. . ./IT WAS COLD/
SOMETHING THAT I SAID (SFPS011)
- 29.11.77 SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES
LOVE IN A VOID/MIRAGE/METAL POSTCARD/
SUBURBAN RELAPSE (SFPS012)
- 31.1.79 JOY DIVISION
EXERCISE ONE/INSIGHT/SHE'S LOST CONTROL/
TRANSMISSION (SFPS013)
- 18.9.85 THE PRIMEVALS
SAINT JACK/SEE THAT SKIN/SPIRITUAL/DISH
OF FISH (SFPS014)
- 22.2.77 JUNE TABOR
LORD BATEMAN/THE BANKS OF THE SWEET
DUNDEE/THE FIDDLE AND THE DRUM/DONAL OG (SFPS015)
- 21.1.79 THE UNDERTONES
LISTENING IN/FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT/BILLY'S
THIRD/HERE COMES THE SUMMER (SFPS016)
- 13.5.85 XMAL DEUTSCHLAND
POLARLICHT DER WIND/JAHR UM JAHR/AUTUMN (SFPS017)
- 23.5.79 THE SPECIALS
GANGSTERS/TOO MUCH TOO YOUNG/CON-
CRETE JUNGLE/MONKEY MAN (SFPS018)
- 5.2.86 STUMP
DOWN ON THE KITCHEN TABLE/ORGASM WAY/
GRAB HANDS/BUFFALO (SFPS019)
- 28.4.81 BIRTHDAY PARTY
RELEASE THE BATS/ROWLAND AROUND IN THAT
STUFF (SOMETIMES)/PLEASURE MUST BURN/LOOSE (SFPS020)
- 19.9.77 THE SLITS
LOVE AND ROMANCE/VINDICTIVE/NEW TOWN/
SHOPLIFTING (SFPS021)
- 1.8.78 SPIZZ OIL
COLD CITY/6000/PURE NOISE/ALIEN LANGUAGE/
PROTECT FROM HEAT/PLATFORM THREE/SWITCHED
OFF (SFPS022)

- 22.10.85 JUNE BRIDES
THIS TOWN WAITING FOR A CHANGE/WE
BELONG/ONE DAY (SFPS023)
- 1.6.82 NEW ORDER
TURN THE HEATER ON/WE ALL STAND/TOO
LATE/5-8-6 (SFPS001)
- 11.12.82 CULTURE
TOO LONG IN SLAVERY/TWO SEVENS CLASH/
LION ROCK/ARMAGEDDON (SFPS024)
- 8.1.79 THE PREFECTS
FAULTS/MOTIONS/BARBARELLA'S/TOTAL LUCK (SFPS025)
- 19.1.86 YEAH YEAH NOH
THE SUPERIMPOSED MAN/STEALING IN THE NAME
OF THE LORD/BLOOD SOUP/(IT'S) EASIER TO SUCK
THAN TO SING (SFPS026)
- 27.7.83 BILLY BRAGG
A NEW ENGLAND/STRANGE THINGS HAPPEN/
THIS GUITAR SAYS SORRY/LOVE GETS
DANGEROUS/FEAR IS A MAN'S BEST FRIEND/
A13, TRUNK ROAD TO THE SEA (SFPS027)
- 27.11.78 THE FALL
PUT AWAY/MESS OF MY/NO XMAS FOR JOHN
KEY/LIKE TO BLOW (SFPS028)
- 17.2.81 GIRLS AT OUR BEST
CHINA BLUE/THIS TRAIN/GETTING
BEAUTIFUL/WARM GOLD FAST FROM
NOWHERE (SFPS029)
- 9.10.82 REDSKINS
UNIONIZE/REDS STRIKE THE BLUES/KICK OVER
THE STATUES/THE PEASANT ARMY (SFPS030)
- 27.10.70 T. REX
JEWEL/RIDE A WHITE SWAN/ELEMENTAL CHILD/
SUN EYE (SFPS031)
- 10.1.79 TUBEWAY ARMY
ME I DISCONNECT FROM YOU/DOWN IN THE
PARK/I NEARLY MARRIED A HUMAN (SFPS032)
- 26.11.79 JOY DIVISION
LOVE WILL TEAR US APART/24 HOURS/COLONY
SOUND OF MUSIC (SFPS033)
- 25.4.77 ADVERTS
QUICKSTEP/GARY GILMORE'S EYES/ONE CHORD
WONDERS/NEW BOYS/BORED TEENAGERS (SFPS034)
- 22.8.84 THE MIGHTY WAH
BASEMENT BLUES - THE STORY OF THE BLUES/
BETTER SCREAM/WEEKENDS/YUH LEARN (SFPS035)
- 5.5.85 THE TRIFFIDS
LIFE OF CRIME/CHICKEN KILLER/LONELY STRETCH (SFPS036)
- 10.9.74 ROBERT WYATT
SOUP SONG/ALIFIB/I'M A BELIEVER/SOUP SONG (SFPS037)
- 11.6.85 THAT PETROL EMOTION
V2/LETTUCE/BLIND SPOT/CAN'T STOP (SFPS038)
- 29.1.81 NEW ORDER
TRUTH/SENSES/ICB/DREAMS NEVER END (SFPS039)
- 30.11.76 THE DAMNED
STAB YOUR BACK/NEAT NEAT NEAT/NEW ROSE/
SO MESSED UP/I FALL (SFPS040)
- 18.1.78 WIRE
PRACTICE-MAKES PERFECT/I AM THE FLY/
CULTURE VULTURES/106 BEATS THAT (SFPS041)
- 12.7.87 ELECTRO HIPPIES
SHEEP/STARVE THE CITY (TO FEED THE POOR)
MELTDOWN/ESCAPE/DEAD END/FAULT/CHICKENS/
MOTHER/MEGA-ARMAGEDDON DEATH (SFPS042)

Coming shortly....Syd Barret, Buzzcocks, Cud, The Stupids