

"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.

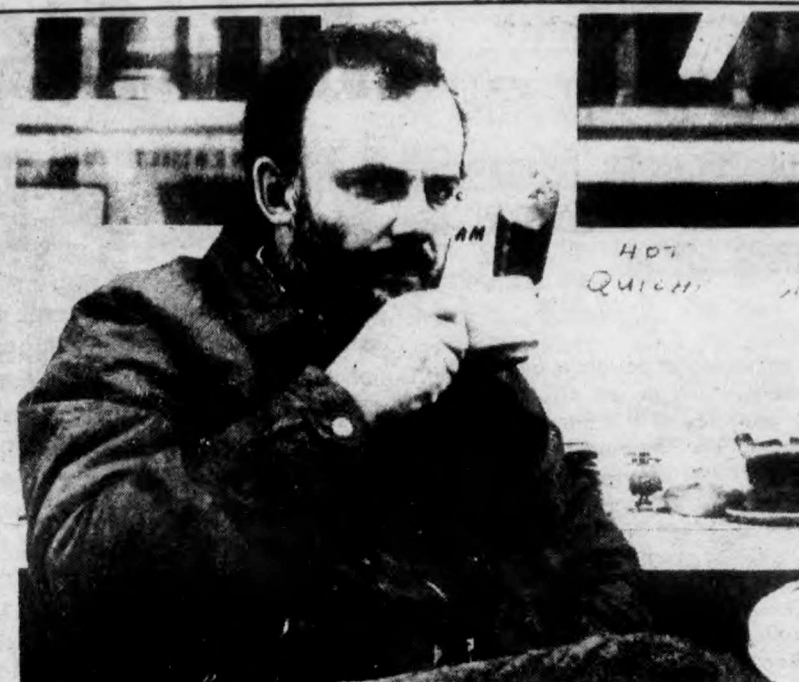
The history of the Peel Session EPs is a fraught one. Now the streets are filled with them; currently over $\times^0 - \pm$ singles that range from the one minute blurts of the Electro Hippies to Robert Wyatt's eight minute musings, from stately New Order sessions and unaccompanied June Tabor songs to 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 '70s passed without Peel's Hendrix, Cream, Bonzo Dog and Pink Floyd sessions appearing on record. Then in -@! 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 = ,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)	1.6.82	NEW ORDER TURN THE HEATER ON/WE ALL STAND/TOO LATE/5-8-6 (SFPS001)
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)	11.12.82	CULTURE TOO LONG IN SLAVERY/TWO SEVENS CLASH/ LION ROCK/ARMAGEDDON (SFPS024)
12.9.78	STIFF LITTLE FINGERS JOHNNY WAS/LAW AND ORDER/BARBED WIRES/ SUSPECT DEVISE (SFPS004)	8.1.79	THE PREFECTS FAULTS/MOTIONS/BARBARELLA'S/TOTAL LUCK (SFPS025)
16.11.83	SUDDEN SWAY LET'S EVOLVE/RELATIONSHIP (SFPS005)	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)
1.5.82	WILD SWANS NO BLEEDING/ENCHANTED/THIRST (SFPS006)	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)
27.8.79	MADNESS THE PRINCE/BED AND BREAKFAST MAN/LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY/STEPPING INTO LINE (SFPS007)	27.11.78	THE FALL PUT AWAY/MESS OF MY/NO XMAS FOR JOHN KEY/LIKE TO BLOW (SFPS028)
18.1.79	GANG OF FOUR I FOUND THAT ESSENCE RARE/RETURN THE GIFT/5.45/AT HOME HE'S A TOURIST (SFPS008)	17.2.81	GIRLS AT OUR BEST CHINA BLUE/THIS TRAIN/GETTING BEAUTIFUL/WARM GOLD FAST FROM NOWHERE (SFPS029)
26.1.86	THE WEDDING PRESENT FELICITY/WHAT BECOMES OF THE BROKEN HEARTED/YOU SHOULD ALWAYS KEEP IN TOUCH WITH BOY FRIENDS/AIT (SFPS009)	9.10.82	REDSKINS UNIONIZE/REDS STRIKE THE BLUES/KICK OVER THE STATUES/THE PEASANT ARMY (SFPS030)
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)	27.10.70	T. REX JEWEL/RIDE A WHITE SWAN/ELEMENTAL CHILD/ SUN EYE (SFPS031)
21.5.79	THE RUTS SUS/SOCIETY/YOU'RE JUST A. . ./IT WAS COLD/ SOMETHING THAT I SAID (SFPS011)	10.1.79	TUBEWAY ARMY ME I DISCONNECT FROM YOU/DOWN IN THE PARK/I NEARLY MARRIED A HUMAN (SFPS032)
29.11.77	SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES LOVE IN A VOID/MIRAGE/METAL POSTCARD/ SUBURBAN RELAPSE (SFPS012)	26.11.79	JOY DIVISION LOVE WILL TEAR US APART/24 HOURS/COLONY SOUND OF MUSIC (SFPS033)
31.1.79	JOY DIVISION EXERCISE ONE/INSIGHT/SHE'S LOST CONTROL/ TRANSMISSION (SFPS013)	25.4.77	ADVERTS QUICKSTEP/GARY GILMORE'S EYES/ONE CHORD WONDERS/NEW BOYS/BORED TEENAGERS (SFPS034)
18.9.85	THE PRIMEVALS SAINT JACK/SEE THAT SKIN/SPIRITUAL/DISH OF FISH (SFPS014)	22.8.84	THE MIGHTY WAH BASEMENT BLUES - THE STORY OF THE BLUES/ BETTER SCREAM/WEEKENDS/YUH LEARN (SFPS035)
22.2.77	JUNE TABOR LORD BATEMAN/THE BANKS OF THE SWEET DUNDEE/THE FIDDLE AND THE DRUM/DONAL OG (SFPS015)	5.5.85	THE TRIFFIDS LIFE OF CRIME/CHICKEN KILLER/LONELY STRETCH (SFPS036)
21.1.79	THE UNDERTONES LISTENING IN/FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT/BILLY'S THIRD/HERE COMES THE SUMMER (SFPS016)	10.9.74	ROBERT WYATT SOUP SONG/ALIFIB/I'M A BELIEVER/SOUP SONG THAT PETROL EMOTION (SFPS037)
13.5.85	XMAL DEUTSCHLAND POLARLICHT DER WIND/JAHR UM JAHR/AUTUMN (SFPS017)	11.6.85	V2/LETTUCE/BLIND SPOT/CAN'T STOP (SFPS038)
23.5.79	THE SPECIALS GANGSTERS/TOO MUCH TOO YOUNG/CON- CRETE JUNGLE/MONKEY MAN (SFPS018)	29.1.81	NEW ORDER TRUTH/SENSES/ICB/DREAMS NEVER END (SFPS039)
5.2.86	STUMP DOWN ON THE KITCHEN TABLE/ORGASM WAY/ GRAB HANDS/BUFFALO (SFPS019)	30.11.76	THE DAMNED STAB YOUR BACK/NEAT NEAT NEAT/NEW ROSE/ SO MESSED UP/I FALL (SFPS040)
28.4.81	BIRTHDAY PARTY RELEASE THE BATS/ROWLAND AROUND IN THAT STUFF (SOMETIMES)/PLEASURE MUST BURN/LOOSE (SFPS020)	18.1.78	WIRE PRACTICE-MAKES PERFECT/I AM THE FLY/ CULTURE VULTURES/106 BEATS THAT (SFPS041)
19.9.77	THE SLITS LOVE AND ROMANCE/VINDICTIVE/NEW TOWN/ SHOPLIFTING (SFPS021)	12.7.87	ELECTRO HIPPIES SHEEP/STARVE THE CITY (TO FEED THE POOR) MELTDOWN/ESCAPE/DEAD END/FAULT/CHICKENS/ MOTHER/MEGA-ARMAGEDDON DEATH (SFPS042)
1.8.78	SPIZZ OIL COLD CITY/6000/PURE NOISE/ALIEN LANGUAGE/ PROTECT FROM HEAT/PLATFORM THREE/SWITCHED OFF (SFPS022)		

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