

Reviews of Primitive Calculators and Friends 1979 – 1982

From: <http://www.apexonline.com/melodybar/catmr~1.htm>

A comprehensive overview of this Melbourne band and their offshoots, including singles and live recordings, from 1979-82. It's pounding beatbox, buzzsaw guitar and screaming keyboard with a vocal snarl of the PIL-Lydon variety. Although it's mostly male vocals, the girls in the band let rip too ("I want to tattoo my whole body so no one will give me a job" - now there's an opening line for you!) and their covers (Beat Goes On, Shout...) are really off the scale! (JC)

From the March 2007 issue of The Wire:

Chapter Music is on safer ground with Melbourne's Primitive Calculators. Their sole album, which pits Suicide rhythms against livewire blasts of gutted guitar and electronics, is the most enduring artefact of Australia's post-punk explosion, and the scrappy live recordings on Primitive Calculators And Friends are exhilarating, particularly an excoriating attack on Johnny O'Keefe's "Shout". It also compiles the group's "I Can't Stop It" 7", the legendary Little Bands compilation 7", assorted post-Calculators recordings from Zye Ye Ye, Take Two, The Egg and Dave Light, and live recordings from Denise Hilton's Thrush And The Cunts. It's as good an overview of their self-contained scene as you could ask for.

By Jon Dale.

From Mess+Noise Webzine:

Wowee! This fascinating companion piece to Chapter's live Primitive Calculators release of 2004 is guaranteed to frighten the living daylight out of everyone who it doesn't utterly inspire. This compilation of tracks documents the Little Band scene that thrived in Melbourne between 1979 and 1982. Included is the only Primitive Calculators studio recording ever released, as well as the entire Little Bands compilation, featuring various spontaneous combinations of the Prim Calcs and their friends hammering home track after track of low-fidelity synth-punk minimalism and percussive experimentation. All electronics are overdriven and all aggression is pure – this is raw and this is the real deal.

These focused people set a certain ball of punk rock momentum rolling all those years ago and I doubt it'll stop. The influence of the ridiculous, passionate bands on this album (Too Fat to Fit Through the Door, Thrush and the Cunts and more) can be heard today in our suburbs through the more adventurous punk combos that regularly form, shift and separate with the ease of lava lamp globules. It's proof that with you can make a movement out of thin air if you get productive with people who share a unified vision.

By Adrian Trajstman

From aquariusrecords.org website:

Existing a few years in the late '70s and early '80s, The Primitive Calculators were a tireless synth-punk band from Melbourne, Australia paralleling what Suicide and The Screamers were doing in New York and the West Coast, respectively. A four piece, the band specialized in dissonant and suitably primitive synths, dangerously fast drum machines, knife-on-the-guitar-strings screechiness and amphetamine-riddled vocal barks, snarls, and agitation. Back in the day, they released only one album, which was a sweaty live album featuring a wreckless performance to only a handful of Aussie art-punks who must have left with blood streaming from their ears. This had been reissued with a bunch of other additional live tracks on Chapter Music in 2005; and the same label has released this anthology of the Primitive Calculators ventures into a recording studio which resulted in a couple of singles. This collection also documents the Melbourne phenomenon known as "The Little Bands," through which the members of the Primitive Calculators would reconvene with other musicians and non-musicians alike to explore various aesthetic trajectories of electro-shock no-wave, splattered metal bashing, post-punk theatrics, and even some Young Marble Giants-esque art-pop. The sound of The Primitive Calculators obviously bleeds into the sounds of "The Little Bands" all sporting names such as Too Fat To Fit Through The Door, The Take, Morpions, and Thrush & The Cunts. As rough as many of these recordings are, this anthology is yet another example of how fertile the post-punk scene was in Melbourne, no matter how much the world had neglected it.

From jivemagazine.com:

After reissuing the landmark 1979 live album by Melbourne's ferocious synth-punk snarlers Primitive Calculators in late 2004, Chapter Music follows up with a crucial compilation of tracks by Primitive Calculators and their friends from the legendary Melbourne Little Band scene. Including the Calculators' only studio recording, the single I Can't Stop It b/w Do That Dance, plus the Little Bands compilation EP (both originally released in 1979 and now highly prized collectors items), plus numerous live and rehearsal recordings, the CD examines a particularly fertile and distinctive time in Melbourne music history, which has been discussed in hushed tones ever since. It takes in bands with names like Thrush And The Cunts and Too Fat To Fit Through The Door, and ranges from disaffected Fitzroy art-punk to Sudanese tribal chanting recorded in London. With liner notes culled from a revealing interview with Prim Calcs members Dave Light, Denise Hilton and Frank Lovece, plus rare photos and song lyrics, Primitive Calculators And Friends is a revelatory companion piece to their live album, which received a rave review from Maximum Rock'n'Roll and a 10 out of 10 Album of the Month feature in Australian Vice Magazine, amongst other stellar clippings on its reissue two years ago.

Link to Vice Magazine interview with Dave and Stuart – sometime in 2008.

<http://tinyurl.com/6vmawr>

Link to 3RRR radio interview with Dave, Stuart and Frank – October 2008.

<http://tinyurl.com/7925re>