

Pleasure Through Entertainment

STORY BY JOHN DUBRULE

.....Brian Brain

On January 9th of the New Year something unusual happened in Tampa. On that date a fairly well known group from England was scheduled to play... this in itself was not unusual... there had been others.... but outside of a few exceptions those groups never played... always at the last moment something happened and once again the Tampa faithful were denied. This time was different though because Brian Brain was scheduled to play and they did indeed play on that night. It was a small miracle that they did though. Things messed up on this end. According to the group themselves Blitz Productions over-extended themselves on their previous event and Brian Brain was cancelled. It was up to the group on their own to spend over \$350 to rent a hall and a P.A. and basically book themselves into Tampa.

The location for this event was the FCA, a private club devoted to the perpetuation of the Confederacy it is rumoured. The backdrop to the stage is a confederate flag. The first group to play was Operation Bellbottom, a group who proclaim... "not just for immigrants". Many of their vocals reflect this as they are either in a foreign language or sound like they are. The emphasis is on RHYTHM with Robert on bass and Nadim (a British Pakistani) on drums. Tony dances frantically on stage in a manner that brings to mind Hollywood movies set in the Mediterranean. This group is too good for Florida and will probably soon move to New York where their music will be at home and appreciated. After O.B., Your Relatives played, a catchy name cause everyone like their relatives afterall. They are a new group and this was their second public appearance. Nonetheless they had a sound that was encouraging for a group so new.

Finally at about 1:30 Brian Brain came on stage. Some of the audience may have been puzzled because there was no drum kit. This is because the drums, played by Martin Atkins, are on tape. Martin is also the vocalist and uses the tape to free himself to concentrate on vocals. As the group goes on stage the tape begins. You are just getting excited when you realize... God! The sound is SHIT!... the vocals are barely audible. "Working Classes" is a good song and Martin Atkins moves excitedly about the stage. The band later confessed to me that they get somewhat embarrassed 'cause some people believe that it's more than the drums that are on tape. This sound was too bad to be on tape. Each song was almost



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undescernable from the previous. The crowd didn't seem to care though... this was the big event... the one that didn't cancel. "Flies" came about mid set... probably the groups next single. Martin Atkins waived his fingers around and looked sinister like a character from Aristophanes' play. For some reason maybe it was just the beer... the sound seemed to clear for their last two songs, "Nature" and their hit "Jive Jive". These two were great. Then the tape ended. After a short break which featured pre-recorded hand clapping the group returned to play "Flies" and "Jive Jive". Again the tape ended and with it the concert. Despite the sound problems the group reached the crowd with it's enthusiasm and ability to proceed unflinchingly.

The next day I visited the group at their room in the Day's Inn. Present were Pete Jones who plays bass, Bobby Surgeoner who plays lead guitar, John Madden who produces their music and is a roadie and Martin Atkins the drummer/vocalist. The group has taken great pains not to live off Martin Atkin's association with PIL (Editor's note: Well how come he's wearing a PIL T shirt on the record then?). Atkins claims that their record and performance contracts have provisions prohibiting any mention of a connection to PIL. Martin has dozens of tales of how people will be nice to him in order to get a chance to talk to Johnny or Keith. Even Pete tells of people asking if Martin ever mentioned what Johnny thought of some topic. Brian Brain's first single was recorded



before Atkins joined PIL but was not released until after he left and was under the pseudonym of Brian Brain to avoid any association. The group's early work was done on borrowed studio time when John Madden who was working with Cliff Richard let the boys in after hours. Before that Jones and Atkins used to play in a small band together called the Hits.

The Brain is currently in the midst of a nation wide tour which started in mid December in New York. This is their second American (5)

tour. They say that they don't play much in England... "England is a pit to play in.." "It's flavor of the week" where people like what they should like. They want to move to New York or Boston. "New York would be nice but I wouldn't want to get in with Keith, Johnny, and Jeanette" says Atkins, who claims that Johnny is fat and a waste. The main thing that keeps them in England is Secret, their record company which has been good to them. "We couldn't afford this tour without them."

Martin explains the group's attitude about their music by example, "have you ever interviewed the Gang of Four" he asks? One of us nods. He goes on to criticize groups like the Gang of Four who use interviews to espouse their political opinions and treat their songs as a vehicle for political expression... "not one government has ever been changed because of some group's lyrics... but what do they do with their music?" One of the boys add "we do more by just giving people pleasure through entertainment than the Gang of Four or the Au Pairs do with their politics." Yet if you examine the lyrics of Brian Brain's songs closely you will find elements of political thoughtfulness... apparently it's the manner it's conveyed that's important to the group.

Brian Brain as individuals are very personable fellows. The whole time that we talked I felt that they were on stage to some degree... joking, telling stories and generally entertaining. They seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely. Pete Jones said that if he never did anything else in his life the last two years would satisfy him to death. They were warned not to come to Tampa... warned that it was to amateurish... things too easily messed up... they came anyways because they wanted the vacation. They came also as missionaries to spread the music to barbaric lands. When we left they all got up and shook our hands and sincerely thanked us for coming. They seemed mature for guys fairly young... outwardly polite in contrast to the image of PIL who so often make sport of their public contacts... and so until some other group or set of folks take a chance the big time once again leaves Tampa.

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