



# Signed, Sealed, Delivered

At a time when 1 in 20 downloads are actually paid for, the lack of a weekly chart show like Top Of The Pops leaves many of us ignorant of what's hot and what's not. It seems as if we are being force-fed Pop Idol, The X Factor and it's ilk through a pop music drip. It is very hard for a working band to get proper media exposure. Why is it a forgone conclusion that manufactured pop acts that win reality shows are virtually guaranteed the Christmas No.1 slot, though thankfully not this year? With the exception of Leona Lewis and Will Young what other acts from this manufactured mess have had any longevity? Where are Rick Waller, Michelle McManus, Steve Brookstein, and Leon Jackson? With Rage Against The Machine bucking this trend, it seems as if music fans are finally seeing the light.

Our local postman is a bit of a rocker! Shunning Simon Cowell's boyband offers, our Postie Simon Rivers of The Bitter Springs takes time out of his busy Christmas delivery schedule to introduce us to his band, who have made 7 albums, and been on the scene for over 3 decades.

**Ed:** So Simon, tell us all about the band. How did you start?

**Si:** At school, me and my mates were into music from an early age. I was making up songs from the age of 5, changing words to other people's songs off the radio. By the time I got to what is now HCC we were very much into music, punk and Bruce Springsteen. That was the mid 70's onwards. I left school in '78,

a time when Tony Blackburn used to do the chart rundown every Sunday. You would sit by the radio and tape it. By the time I got to the Rectory, at the end of year school party we decided to dress up as The Rezzillos. They had a song called 'Top of the Pops', very catchy, that we mimed to. It went down so well, we thought if we can mime it, then why can't we start a band? We did. We started writing songs together. We learnt different instruments. Dan was on the bass, Neil learnt the drums, Martin started playing saxophone, which we don't have anymore.

**Ed:** What would you say is your style of music?

**Si:** The strands of music that we were into came from everywhere. Because of Top of the Pops the music was so varied - some of the band liked Philly Soul, others punk, like Stranglers, The Clash and The Sex Pistols. When it came to making our own music all of these influences played a part in creating our own sound. Our music has always been really different - one minute we try to sound like Steely Dan, the next we may do a country track. I was bought up with Johnny Cash and the early Rolling Stones. We wanted to be English and sound English - that was one thing that punk really bought home - singing in your own voice. As long as I am singing my own words I am happy.

**Ed:** where was your first proper gig?

**Si:** it was Valerie Duckett's birthday party in Buckingham Road. We did Tom Robinson - '2 - 4 - 6 - 8 Motorway', 'I don't want to

get over you' by The Undertones, and one original song. I left school at 15 and worked on building sites, as my dad was a builder, and also in a factory. They weren't the most glamorous jobs, but they gave me time to write songs. As a postman now, I still do this - walking around I will get the idea for a song. We have made 7 albums, are currently on our 8th and have 10 ep's to our name. We have also played 2 John Peel sessions, as Last Party. We changed our name - we were Last Party for about 10 years. We had really good reviews in Melody Maker and NME, we were doing okay as Last Party but felt we were being taken for granted. We thought we would get renewed attention and a fairer hearing if we changed our name.

**Ed:** Can you think of a time when you thought you were on the cusp of tasting success?

**Si:** We never really thought that, we only got attention from the labels once or twice and that when we approached them. As The Bitter Springs, we have done a couple of gigs in Spain with audiences of over 4,000. In England we've played in big venues when supporting acts like Kitchens of Distinction and Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine - they really liked us so we got a few gigs with them. We used to play The Fulham Greyhound - The Stone Roses' first gig in London was with us there. They had a different sound then. Before the gig they were shy, then when then they played the Northern cockiness came out.

**Ed:** How do you see the music industry nowadays? How can a band like yourselves progress without the exposure that contestants in reality shows take for granted?

**Si:** I think we progress the right way. We've got better at playing because we don't have the pressure to deliver an album to a deadline. Some bands get signed to a major one year, then dropped the next, and they end up never making music again. It must be soul destroying when they get caught up in the mechanics of it all. These reality TV contestants stand in front of the camera and force themselves - saying it's always been my dream to do this - they have to get really stuck in and do it. To cover a 20 year old Whitney Houston song is not a valid musical career - it's karaoke. The thing with doing your own stuff is that it is hard - a winning reality contestant may be famous for a year or so but in a few years they will be doing something else. We are really happy.

If you want to see Simon's new video type The Bitter Springs into You Tube. The founditguide office love the track and video of 'And Even Now'. Check out the video - some of the locations may be familiar!

**The Bitter Springs play live on Saturday  
April 24th at The Wilmington Arms  
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