

All Back to Vinyl Richard Purden – The La's Callin' All

It's exactly 30 Years since The La's released their self-titled debut in October 1990.

The buzz around the Liverpool band in the late 1980s and early 90s would help set the tone for a massive musical shift along with Manchester's Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses. Lee Mavericks was a cultural light at the end of the tunnel for music fans in the era of Thatcherism.

This working-class freethinker with infectious mystical energy had the ball at his feet. For many, he would kick that ball into the long grass and never get it back. Eventually, Oasis would run with the baton creating a cultural phenomenon but Noel Gallagher would admit: "We kind of want to finish what The La's started".

The La's remain perhaps the greatest lost band of them all and this first-time vinyl release Callin' All on The Viper Label is further evidence of the fact. An enchanting version of Timeless Melody is unfiltered 1963 Beatles with some extra licks and riffs are thrown into the band's sonic melting pot during this 1987 recording of the much-loved single.

Callin' All includes the first live performance of There She Goes recorded live at The Flying Picket the same year, it's circular riff has lost none of the permanent magic, the ebb and flow of time can't diminish the wonder of it all even now.



The La's

Despite all members of the band being on the dole during the Thatcher years, there is an unshakable spirit even on the likes of Doledrum a playful, skiffle led nod to years of hopeless unemployment. It's in every rockabilly strum during a tremolo heavy version of Failure, yet another two-and-a-half-minute masterpiece!

While we never get to hear the vision inside Lee's head, this "snapshot of a snapshot" is perhaps the closest we're ever going to get. The guitars might be out of tune but as Kurt Cobain and Liam Gallagher, both stated: "It doesn't matter if it's out of tune." It's about much more than that.

Interview with former La's guitarist Paul Hemmings

Former La Paul Hemmings is behind Liverpool's Viper Label along with another former band member Mike Badger. Here the Gretsch playing guitarist reflects on his time with the legendary Liverpool four-piece and these pivotal recordings.

He describes seeing Lee Mavers performing before joining the band: "It was in Lark Lane which was kind of like Liverpool's Greenwich Village, it was where Echo & the Bunnymen wrote The Killing Moon. These bedsits had once been merchant houses and they were now pretty run down. One of the songs Lee played was Son Of A Gun, it was May 24th 1986. I remember it to this day because it was my birthday. Watching Lee was like watching a Brian Jones version of Bob Dylan; it was like a light was shining over him. The next time I saw him he was coming round to my house with Mike to buy an amp. He tried to steal a vintage part of my Gretsch guitar, you couldn't get them at the time."

One of many great legends associated with The La's is that they had wanted Captain Beefheart to produce their debut album and that Virgin had set aside £30,000 if they could track down

Don Van Vliet.



The La's Paul with guitar

"It was the wrong time to record a band like this," says Hemmings today. "When you first record a song you capture something, when you are playing the same songs five years later you lose that spark, you can only get it so many times. He'll never get the ultimate recording."

Callin' All features the first live recording of There She Goes, the track keeps Mavericks in jam as a radio staple, but for fans of the band it's just one of many classic songs penned during the era.

"He had written it in his bedroom and he played it to me about 11 o'clock in the morning. I was one of the first few people to hear it, I think his mum would have heard it first. The hair on the back of my neck stood on end; I was thinking 'where the hell did this come from'. It took ages to get the middle eight right but that recording is the first time we played it live."

Although previously released on CD this is the first time Callin' All has been released on vinyl. Hemmings, Mike Badger and Lee Mavericks were all involved with original release which came with their former bandleader's consent.

"He likes them, he's sympathetic because it's like an old blues recording in respect to how it was recorded in the 20th century. It's the best it can possibly be."

The La's Callin' All is available from The Viper Label: www.the-viper-label.co.uk



Jake Summerton Band Shot