

Fuchsia



Fuchsia

The mystical and beautiful character of Fuchsia first emerged in Mervyn Peake's novels *Tina's Groan* (1946) and *Gormenghast* (1950).

Fuchsia Groan was the daughter and first child of Sepulchraive, 76th Earl of Groan, and his Countess. She was the lover of Steerpike and was described as being "gauche in movement and in a sense, ugly of face, but with how small a twist might she not suddenly have become beautiful. Her sullen mouth was full and rich – her eyes smouldered". The earldom of Groan and the family seat Gormenghast could only be inherited by a son and thus she was ignored.

The same sense of smouldering gaucheness as befitted her countenance inhabits the cover and the music contained in the self-titled debut album from British Art Rock band Fuchsia.

Anne Marie Anderson's striking artwork captures Fuchsia Groan's romantic allure and mystique. The pre-Raphaelite drawing of a woman with long black hair piercing eyes with a countenance that appears unbecoming at first, yet when glanced from different angles reveals a strange beguiling twin barrelled beauty and danger, also characterises the album perfectly.

Fuchsia's music strangely equales, bewilders and beckons in a equal measure, moving from British '70s Folk Rock mixed with Canterbury

flavoured Progressive whimsy and Beatlesque and ELO styled orchestrations.

Fuchsia was released in November 1971 in the UK by the recently established (and short lived) progressive label, Pegasus Records, an imprint of B&C Records. It also received a release in France in 1972 and subsequently sunk without trace until it became revered as an Acid Folk holy grail and developed a mystique worthy of its reputation.

Fuchsia was the work of a six-piece Art Rock band formed in Exeter University comprised of singer / songwriter, guitarist Tony Durant with the string section of Madeleine Bland (cello/piano/harmonium), Janet Rogers (violin) and Vanessa Hall-Smith (viola), bassist Michael Day and drummer Michael Gregory. Their combined alchemy produced music of rare dexterity and promise; and their mix of a string trio and rock rhythm section created a sound that was fresh, exciting and accomplished.



Tony Durant was born in London's Palmers Green but his family moved to South Africa for a time before returning to England. Between 1966 and 1968 he played the London underground rock circuit at venues such as UFO and Middle Earth with the Psychedelic band Louise whose lineup included songwriter Robert Chudley and future Henry Cow member Chris Cutler.

Relocating to Exeter University, Tony fell in with drummer Michael Gregory and bassist Michael Day and formed Fuchsia. They were soon joined by Madeleine Bland, Janet Rogers and Vanessa Hall-Smith, all students from a purely classical background who wanted to do something musically different.

The band divided its live show between rock trio material and fully orchestrated songs with the string section in tow. "It was a very adventurous project with great production difficulties in actually amplifying the strings for live performances, together with our relative

lack of experience" Tony recalls. "I wanted to experiment with writing songs not to the normal pop format, rather a series of musical themes, which start at a particular, point and move on, without necessarily following the normal classic pop song format. Also I wanted to experiment making the string parts an integral part of the song itself, rather than something added to embellish the song once written".

Fuchsia played a few gigs at the university, and recorded a demo tape of two songs, Ring of Red Roses coupled with Shoes & Ships, at a studio in Torquay. "A good friend in the industry, Paul Conroy, passed the demo on to Terry King, who signed us up to his company and in turn got a deal with Pegasus. I think Terry was as impressed by the radically different approach to the music as he was by the fact that there were three girls in the band!"

Fuchsia's debut album was recorded at Sound Techniques Studios in Chelsea and was produced by David Hitchcock of Caravan, Camel and Mellow Candle fame and was engineered by Victor Gans. "We recorded the album in the early summer of '71 with David Hitchcock producing, and then went back to university, with the intention of doing a promotional tour for the album in the next holidays" Tony later told *High Dellar* from *Shindig!* Magazine. "The label seemed keener on the heavier Baroque songs with strings so that was the road we went down".

EXETER UNIVERSITY GUILD OF STUDENTS PRESENT

RAG·WALK·DISCO
with professional
debut of **FUCHSIA+**
Pouch of Douglas 8-11:30
& **DISCO+LIGHTS** Sat March 6
20p-FREE if you finish the walk

Fuchsia was released in November 1971 and was graced with Anne Marie Anderson's distinctive cover art and a back cover featuring a group photo taken on Hampstead Heath. Sadly the album received minimal publicity, advertised in Melody Maker sharing an in house Pegasus advertisement with Nazareth and folk singer Shirley Collins and The Albion Country Band and some complimentary press reviews. The proposed promotional tour disappointingly failed to materialise and after months in limbo, the project came to an end. Tony Durant reflects: "We recorded another demo, with two songs Our Band and Ragtime Brahms but we failed to capture a new record deal." On Fuchsia's demise, Tony Durant moved into session work playing with Punchin' Judy and reggae band Greyhound before moving to Australia in 1978 to work with Dave Warner and forge a successful career as a jingle writer.



Greg

take up the post of Director of the British Institute of Florence. She returned to London in 2011 and has since started singing and playing the violin again. Michael Gregory played with The Albion Band, The Greenhouse Band and currently plays with the Ric Sanders Trio

(with Ric Sanders and Vo Fletcher).

Michael Day played in various part-time bands in London and worked with House of Fraser. He moved into IT joining BIS Information systems as a consultant and became director of Application Services



Leslie

Fuchsia returned to Tony Durant's life in 2004 through Italian collector Gianpaolo Banelli, who alerted him to inferior bootleg copies available and licensed the album for release on Nightwings Records. Spurred on by the cult success of the reissue, Tony formed a new line up of Fuchsia and released a new album *Fuchsia 2: From Psychedelia to a Distant Place*. An online communique from David Svedmyr from Swedish acid folk band Me and My Kites (named after a song on Fuchsia) began a recording and writing collaboration that extended to Tony Durant and Me and My Kites touring Europe under the Fuchsia guise. Having completed a European tour themselves, promoting their album, they suggested a joint affair, the songs of Fuchsia played as "Fuchsia-Kites".

Vanessa Hall-Smith worked as a media solicitor in London for many years before moving to Italy to



Maibly



in Schroder's IT department. Taking early retirement in 2002, he currently works as a genealogist researching family histories for clients under the name of Mayday Genealogy working part-time between London and France.

Madeleine Bland married Tim King and still lives in the UK while Janet Rogers disappeared from public life.

Fuchsia meanwhile has acquired cult status and become highly influential among the acid folk / prog rock populos, eliciting reaction like that of Me and My Kites founder David Svedmyr who regards it as the Bible!!! *Fuchsia* has rightly assumed a place as an acid folk Holy Grail and four decades on from its inception, the album still weaves its beguiling musical spell; its strange gauche and magical beauty still intact.



John O'Regan
October 2015
Thanks to Tony Durant, Vanessa Hall-Smith, Madeleine King, Michael Day, Michael Gregory, Gianpaolo Bannelli, Hugh Dellar, Jon Lewis, Vicky Powell & Mark Powell



FUCHSIA — PEG 8
Fuchsia a band of six students have recorded their first album and they must be feeling pleased with the result. The fusion of a three piece rock group and three girls with classical training provides an album that must be the answer to the question 'Can rock be paralleled to classical music?'



Guerssen Records would like to thank Nikos Karathanassis at Anaxilos Records for providing audio master, scans and photos. Thanks also to John O'Regan and Tony Durant.

Note: Fuchsia are still going and have produced later material which has received outstanding reviews.

More info at:
facebook.com/Fuchsiamusic
fuchsiamusic.com



Side One		Side Two	
Gone with the Mouse	4:01	Shoes and Ships	6:14
A Tiny Book	8:03	The Nothing Song	8:23
Another Nail	6:57	Me and my Kite	2:34
		Just Anyone	3:33

TONY DURANT: acoustic guitar/electric guitar/lead vocals
MICHAEL DAVY: bass guitar
MICHAEL GREGORY: drums and percussion
JANET ROGERS: violin/backing vocals
MADELEINE BLAND: cello/piano/harmonium/backing vocals
VANESSA HALL-SMITH: violin/backing vocals

Engineer: Vic Gamm
 Assistant Engineer: Steve Mayberry
 Recorded at Sound Techniques Studios
 Produced by David Hitchcock
 Design & Art Direction: ROC Advertising
 Illustration: Anne Marie Anderson

All songs written by Tony Durant, with the exception of "Another Nail" which was written by Tony Durant and Robert Chudley and "Me and My Kite" which was written by Robert Chudley.


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MICHAEL DAY: bass guitar

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