

wild sounds from past dimensions

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UGLY THINGS

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Angel Face... Strike Up... Loose Heart... Stinky Toys...

HERVÉ ZÉNOUDA

There is a very good chance you don't know his name, but Hervé Zénouda was something of a Zelig of the early Parisian punk/new wave scene.

He had a spot in *Angel Face*, which has already been the subject of an *Ugly Things* feature story (Issue #28). *Strike Up* and *Loose Heart* may not exactly be household names, yet they were around among the firsts of the first wave—and were gone before most joined: the fact that neither released any recordings before 2014 certainly didn't help their visibility.

Stinky Toys on the other hand should be familiar to most, even though some may have not heard their recordings. The Toys had a few releases outside of France, too: their first single had a British pressing (with a different picture sleeve); their first album a Dutch one, and a CD was later issued in the UK; their second album went as far as Taiwan, again in the form of a CD.

Drumming for these four bands, Hervé Zénouda was right there at the scene's ground zero. His mastery of the kit was indeed quite in demand for a few years. Among others, he ended up recording with *Guilty Razors* and *Mathématiques Modernes*. The former's lone seven-inch, a stone classic of the punk era (despite taking a few liberties with the English language), has been well covered on the reissue market. The latter won't have much appeal to many *UT* readers, being a strict synth-pop affair, but their 1980 single "Disco-Rough" is a genuine gem of the genre (one of the very few kept). *Mathématiques Modernes*'s vocalist was Edwige Braun-Belmore, a famous face on the early Parisian scene (and a member of LUV, an ephemeral all-girl punk band); she later became a scenester in the Big Apple, a regular at places like Studio 54 and the Palladium, hanging out in Warhol's entourage before relocating to Miami where she passed away in 2015.

So despite a low profile (check out *Stinky Toys*' press coverage and you'll generally only see pictures of Elli Medeiros and Jacno), Hervé Zénouda's resume is thoroughly impressive, and albeit evolving quite radically, he never gave up his passion for music...

talks about the early years of the Parisian punk scene

By Laurent Bigot

Hervé: I was born in Paris. My parents were small Jewish shopkeepers originally from Algeria. We lived in Paris, except for about five years we spent in the suburbs. I was 12 when we moved back to the capital. We settled in Le Marais, then still a working-class neighborhood [now a pretty swanky area split between the Jewish and gay parts of town]. I entered Charlemagne High School where I met most of the people I was going to play with. The first ones were Pierre Cousseau and Jean-Louis and Patrick Boulanger, then, a year or two later, Denis Quilliard (not yet known as Jacno) and Elli Medeiros who attended the Victor Hugo all-girl high school in our neighborhood. It was the Post-68 Years and together, we got into music, started mastering an instrument, taking hallucinogenic drugs, and reading *Actual* [probably the most famous magazine coming out of the then French Underground], the rock press and Jerry Rubin's *Do It...*

With Pierre, Jean-Louis and Patrick, we formed a band that after a few different names became *Strike Up*. Pierre, who soon changed his name to Pierre Goddard, was on bass and lead vocals, the Boulanger brothers took the

guitars, I was on drums and another friend from school, Christian Duc, was in charge of the keyboards. For his part, Denis Quilliard, a Who fanatic, was also learning to play drums. Elli was more interested in drawing at this point...

What were your influences as a drummer?

At first, it was Robert Wyatt of *Soft Machine* and Mitch Mitchell. Jimi Hendrix had been one of the first to make a big impression on me. But the one drummer that was probably my favorite was Aynsley Dunbar who played with Frank Zappa, Lou Reed, Bowie... [let's not forget his early days in Liverpool behind Freddy Starr and with the Mojos]. His style was terribly original, melodic and musical. He was definitely my main influence as a drummer. I mixed his approach with MCS's Dennis Thompson's way of playing above the rhythm. Let's not forget Billy Ficca of *Television* on "Little Johnny Jewel." It's quite odd that he impressed me for life with that one song while on everything else that band recorded I never found his work very significant, though I love *Television* and especially Tom Verlaine both as a singer and a guitar player. And lastly, being a Captain Beefheart fanatic, I loved John "Drumbo" French, but his technique was way out of my league. Nowadays, the general technical level has increased so much, it's pretty astounding. Tons of super talented new drummers appear every week on the web.

How was the scene early on?

It was an era of pop and progressive music. The French scene was dominated by Ange, Triangle, Magma... There was already some interesting stuff, like Etron Fou Leloublan, Fille Qui Mousse, Art Zoyd, Urban Sax or Red Noise, but I discovered these after-the-fact... For many of

Stinky Toys, winter 1976.



us, the one thing that opened our ears was a TV show, *Pop 2*, hosted by Patrice Blanc-Francard on the second channel [out of the three available until more were authorized in the early '80s]. It was our University of Rock. It aired on Saturday afternoons, and was basically the broadcast of a show taped earlier in the week at the Bataclan in Paris. The selection was quite impressive, from Pop Prog acts such as Genesis, Van Der Graaf Generator, Caravan, Soft Machine, Matching Mole, Can, to pre-punk artists like Captain Beefheart, the Velvet Underground [well, Nico, Lou Reed and John Cale so close enough], the MC5, the Flamin' Groovies, the New York Dolls, Roxy Music... [The MC5 and Dolls shows both famously ended in violence.]

Also important was Marc Zermati's record store, the Open Market, in the Les Halles neighborhood [right in the center of Paris, just west from Le Marais]. It was a place of meeting and rehearsing. Marc was older than everyone, and he made our musical education. Through him, we discovered *Nuggets*, the Groovies, Kim Fowley, the Velvet Underground, the Stooges... A little later, in the same vicinity, Michel Esteban opened his (rock) t-shirt store, Harry Cover [a cool store despite its pretty lame word play of a name, Harry Cover sounding in French like haricot vert, green bean; I managed to visit it once as a teen, and still have the Pistols' sweat-shirt I purchased there nearly 40 years ago]. It was in Les Halles Street, where the Cousseau brothers were living, Lizzy Mercier too. I use to see Lizzy in the neighborhood and fell madly in love with her, without ever having the guts to talk to her [at this point]. Afterwards, Michel and Lizzy made frequent trips to New York City, bringing back tapes of early CBGB's shows by the Ramones, Talking Heads, Television, the Heartbreakers...

The Gibus Club was already there but I don't remember ever going there so early on. As far as local bands, the Dogs were around [half the band's first line-up being from Rouen in Normandy, the other from Paris], and the Frenchies. We used to bump into the latter at the Open Market, but we hadn't much in common. They were older and more into hard rock, the glitter touch they added later when they got their new singer [Jean-Marie Poiré a.k.a. Martin Dune soon to become a very popular film director] was overrated and pretty has-been, their music wasn't very impressive. We strangely never met the guys from the Dogs then. I only got to know their bass player Zox years later.



In one of his early '70s pieces, Lester Bangs while visiting Paris mentions crossing path with "punques"? The word was already in the air...

I believe I first noticed the word in the *Nuggets* liner notes, but it's above all Yves Adrien and his article *Je chante le rock électrique* [I sing the electric rock] published in the magazine *Rock & Folk* in January 1973 that the word took its full meaning for us. It was following another piece he had written, for the fanzine *Parapluie* [Umbrella] in 1972, *Manifeste de la panther électrique* [Electric panther manifesto]. He was bringing back in the light our glorious forerunners, the Stooges and the MC5, but also the Who and the Kinks. It was his call to arms for the coming musical uprising. We were all reading the rock press, *Rock en Stock*, *Best*, *Rock & Folk*, but also underground fanzines such as *Gare du Nord* and *Annie aime les sucettes* [Annie likes lollipops]. And of course, *Rock News* published by our friends Michel Esteban and Lizzy Mercier. But without question Adrien had the biggest impact on the scene. Other journalists like Alain Pacadis, Patrick Eudeline, Stéphane Petri or Jean-Eric Perrin,

all people we used to know, went along as the scene grew up.

What's the scoop on the legendary Colloque de Tanger [Tangier Symposium]?

While still in high school, Pierre, Jean-Louis, Patrick and I had started to play together. We were basically just playing covers, stuff like the Velvets or the Stooges, and beginning to master our instruments of choice. Every week we had a new name, going by Nancy & the Spittle for a while before opting for Strike Up. I remember spending a whole evening at my place with the others looking for a definitive name. It was essential for us that it was an English name, and that it starts with an "s" (as in Stooges). Strike Up was short, hard-hitting, like a call to arms, and it sounded neat. Much better than Nancy & the Spittle.

Around the same time, I had answered an ad in the press, and had started rehearsing with a pretty pathetic band that was doing Status Quo covers: not my cup of tea. This one was soon history, but through it I met Pascal Régoli and we became fast friends. I then met his brother Julien and Riton who were about to form Angel Face, a band I was going to drum for in their earliest incarnation. Anyway, during the summer of 1975, Patrick Eudeline, then already writing for *Best*, offered us a series of shows in Geneva [Switzerland], a celebration for William Burroughs, present at the event. Other poets were attending such as Henry Chopin or Bernard Heidsieck. We were billed as the Wild Boys and we played three shows altogether after a couple of rehearsals. September 26th, 27th and 28th. Each number was more or less a long improv based on a few rudimentary chords, something like "Sister Ray." Eudeline was snubbing me because I didn't know who Burroughs was. I still haven't read him but at least now I'm familiar with his world and know his place in literature.

A few weeks later, in October, I played my first show with Angel Face at the *Rouge* festival [a communist weekly]. Same deal: a few rehearsals and long instrumental improvisations. The band had no singer yet, it was essentially a mix of Riton's riffs and Julien's psychedelic solos. Patrick Eudeline joined us on vocals for the February 1976 show at the Plan K in Brussels [Belgium]. You could say that between Strike Up, Denis and Elli, then Angel Face, the formation of the Parisian punk scene was in place.



Left: Strike Up, 1976.

L to R: Jean-Louis Boulanger, Hervé Zénoua, Pierre Cousseau, Christian Duc, Patrick Boulanger.

Right: Hervé and Patrick in Strike Up.

Top: Patrick Boulanger, 1976.



Were you a steady member of Angel Face?

I never saw myself as a member. They were friends, I didn't mind what they were doing, but they didn't really have any songs at this point. I just played a couple of shows and moved on.

Why was Strike Up such a flash in the pan?

After the Geneva hiatus, Strike Up resumed its practice sessions in order to set up original material in the vein of the Velvet and the Stooges. We only recorded one song that came out forty years later on a compilation of late '70s French punk bands. In May 1976, despite having yet to play in front of an audience as Strike Up, the band appeared on the front cover of Michel Esteban's magazine, *Rock News* [#4], along with Johnny Rotten (his first front cover ever I believe). Though we will later on have some loose connections with the British scene, as I got to know Glen Matlock and members of Subway Sect and the Slits, our roots were in America, in Detroit and New York City rather than London. This was the source of the collapse of Strike Up when the Boulanger Brothers left. And again it was later on the origin of the end of Loose Heart.

Whatever happened to Christian Duc?

I haven't heard anything about him in decades. I know he worked as an accountant at some point but have no idea really.

How did Stinky Toys start?

Denis got expelled from Charlemagne following a strike related to the Debré Law [a law changing the rules about postponing compulsory military service for students; it generated massive strikes in schools and colleges resulting in significant amendments in the final text]. He started his rock 'n' roll life with a duo with singer Pierre Meige [later to briefly managed LUV—a seat next fleetingly filled by Jean-Louis Boulanger—before leading pop rock band Connection, then going solo for a handful of records on RCA], which evolved into a band called Blood Sucker featuring Rikky Darling [later in Asphalt Jungle and Métal Urbain].

Then came a more interesting project with Elodie Lauten that he had met through Marc Zermati. Elodie had just spent a few years in New York City and came back to Paris bringing along avant-garde violinist Boris Gladstone [ex-Jack Ruby, later Police Band]. She would turn us on to Suicide's music. With her, Denis gave up drumming and took up guitar. This short-lived project included Elodie (vocals, piano), Boris (electric violin), Denis (guitar), Patrick and Jean-Louis Boulanger (guitars) and myself on drums. Again, it only lasted a few rehearsals before Elodie moved back to the USA and started her career as a contemporary / minimalist music composer. Gladstone moved back with her. I met him again a few years later in New York: a strange dude, didn't talk much, a bit of a poser, but pretty talented, I liked him a lot.

So then Denis took the nickname Jacno [because of Marcel Jacno, designer of Gauloises cigarettes packaging, Denis being himself a chain-smoker] and wrote his first songs in a

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style close to the Rolling Stones and the Who (he was a major fan of both), but also the Velvet and Stooges, inescapable influences in these pre-punk days. He asked Elli to sing his new songs. They recorded a demo [three songs] at the Delalande Studios in Paris with Albin Deriat on bass, Jacno taking care of both guitars and drums.

With Strike Up, we had booked ourselves our very first show in the basement of a Pizza restaurant, La Pizza du Marais, later known as the Blancs-Manteaux Theatre. It was coming up on July 4th, 1976, but Strike Up dissolved itself in June. So in the end, the bands playing turned out to be Angel Face, with Pierre Cousseau on vocals and me again on drums, and Stinky Toys for their first show, the lineup being Jacno, Elli, with Bruno Carone on second guitar, Albin Deriat on bass and myself on drums.

What kind of audience showed up?

Mostly friends and some local hipsters. The owner of the pizzeria thought he could get new

customers by having shows in his basement so he gave it a try. Though I'm pretty sure the idea of having bands playing there came from us.

Do you remember any other bands at Charlemagne? I know there was Oxyde [late '70s lo-fi punk fans should track down their 1978 split EP with Crystal Eyes reissued by Caméleon Records, check it on the label's Bandcamp]...

No I didn't know any other. I remember Guillaume Loizillon who was into synthesizers and later played with Hector Zazou. I met him again twenty years later through his trAce Label, specialized in experimental music that he had started with two friends, the composers Patrick Muller and Laurent Saitet.

What about Loose Heart?

After Strike Up's break up, Jean-Louis and Patrick [from now on respectively going under the names Hermann Schwartz and Pat/Nancy Lüger] joined Clode Panik and Eric Debris in



Loose Heart, early 1977. L to R: Pierre Cousseau, Pascal Régoli, Hervé Zénouda.

Right: Fred Cousseau, Hervé, Elli, Pierre Cousseau, Patricia (Pierre's then girlfriend) 1976



Métal Urbain [Hermann also had two short-lived projects with Didier Esteban—Michel's brother, who also later played with Lizzy Mercier—the Velvets-influenced/proto-Noise European Son and the punk band Man Ray]. Pierre and myself with Pascal Régoli on bass started Loose Heart. With this line-up, we did a few self-organized shows: Crépy-en-Valois's youth center, the Charles V college in Paris, both in December 1976, the Mouffetard Theater [Paris] in January and April 1977... Then we broke up. Pierre wanting to move on towards British style punk rock, which he did with his next band, 1984 (a.k.a. 84 Flesh).

We had recorded three songs in our practice room and that became an EP on Danger Records forty years later, and a live recording became an album on *Mémoire Neuve*, released last winter. We were basically a mix of Stooges and MC5 influences, playing at fast tempos with noisy guitar breaks. At this point, Loose Heart was my real band. Early on, I was in the "Toys only to help them as a friend, I wasn't totally excited by their project. I only felt like a real member by the second album, the final year.

I read in an old issue of *Rock & Folk* that David Rochline was going to join Loose Heart as their lead singer in the Spring of '77—was that the case?

Yes and no. I wanted David to join Loose Heart, and we had a few tryouts, but he never managed to push any sound out of his mouth. [laughs]

It was a very odd choice as he was more of a pop singer [he had released two singles on CBS in '73 and '74 both co-written with soon-to-be-famous French singer Alain Bashung]?

Yes, he made a few records, but music was not his main strength. He was too much of an intellectual to be a good musician [laughs]. He was a talented set designer, and later on an excellent painter, but I discovered that latter aspect of his work after he had passed away in 2015.

Where did the names come from?

Not sure about Loose Heart, maybe a Modern Lovers' influence, but I don't remember. Stinky Toys came from Dinky Toys.

What were the relations with the other bands on the Parisian scene?

I knew Métal Urbain because of the Boulanger brothers, and I knew Clode Panik and Eric Débris a little. But I never liked the band. I lost touch with the brothers pretty fast. Same with Patrick Eudeline: as soon as he had Asphalt Jungle going on—another band I didn't like—we lost touch. I didn't know the guys in Gasoline, though I'm sure I must have bumped into Alain Kan at one of those parties. I knew Fred Chichin who played in the last Gasoline line-up, after the singles. On the other hand, I liked the girls in Les Lou's, personally and as a band. I even played a bit with [Tolim] Toto [bass] and [Pamela] Popo [vocals, guitar] after their break up. The bands closest to Stinky Toys were Modern Guy [their single and album were produced by John Cale] and Suicide Roméo [featuring Pierre Goddard].

What about the other scenes in France, outside of Paris?

We had very little contact with the Provinces. Early on, Pierre and myself had made a few trips to London. We met people like Steve Strange who later became famous with Visage. We'd go to Malcolm McLaren's shop, Sex, and to the clubs. Later on, Rob Symmons, Subway Sect's guitarist [these days with the Fallen Leaves] stayed with me in Paris for a few weeks. [Unbeknownst to Hervé, Paul Myers and Symmons, just after being kicked out of Subway Sect, asked Yves Adrien for Hervé's contact to offer him to join them in a new band they were about to start; Adrien had acknowledged this in the October 1978 of *Rock & Folk* yet Hervé has never heard about this project until now.]

You were still living with your parents. What were they thinking about all this?

My parents were a little weird sometimes. I come from a quite traditionalist Jewish family, and my father, beyond his apparent authoritarianism, was a very modest man. There were things that were said and others that were done. He talked severely, but left me much freedom in the end. And so when they would go away—which happened quite often—I sometimes stayed on my own in our apartment rue Sévigné for a few weeks. I put on parties where all the Parisian punks used to come. Those evenings were pretty turbulent, so there is no way my parents didn't know about them. Yet, they never said a word. They also let me have a drum kit in my small teenager's bedroom. I can well imagine their ordeal...

How come Marc Zermati didn't invite Loose Heart or the "Toys to play at the Mont De-Marsan Punk Festivals?

No idea... For my part, stupidly, I snubbed him for a long time because he was older and too "rock 'n' roll" for me. He also had the reputation of not being very reliable. In short, he had been some kind of a mentor for all of us but a distance remained, especially as far as Strike Up and Loose Heart were concerned. I'm not sure about Denis and Elli.

Did you go see the Sex Pistols at the *Chalk du Loc* (September 1976, their first show outside of the UK)?

Yes. Glen Matlock came to my place and played me a tape of their demos with the severe figure of Chagall's *Rabbi* watching over on the wall, a copy unfortunately. I remember hearing versions of "Pretty Vacant" and "Problems."

Going back to the "Toys: what came next after that first show?

Things picked up pretty fast. The same month of July '76, we played at the Labor festival with among others Jean-Pierre Kalfon band [who played at the first Mont-de-Marsan punk festival the following month]. It was a



Stinky Toys, 100 Club, September 1976.



organized by the Anti-Psychiatry Center founded by left-wing radicals/philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Through Michel Estéban and Pierre Benain, a journalist, also co-student of Charlemagne, Malcolm McLaren invited us to play at the London Punk festival at the 100 Club in September along with the Buzzcocks, Glash, Chris Spedding & the Vibrators, the Damned, Sex Pistols, Stouxsie & the Banshees and Subway Sect. As a result of that event, Elli appeared on the front page of the *Melody Maker*, a first for a French act.

We came to the festival without any equipment, just the guitars and drum sticks. So we had to borrow the gear. The Clash lent us the amps, and I played on Rat Scabies's drums. We got on well with the Clash, but Sid Vicious ran after Bruno in the club's hallways, a knife in his hand. For my part, I fell in love with the Subway Sect and was totally fascinated by the Bromley Contingent.

The same month, we played the Chalet du Lac in Paris, then in November at the Festival Bas-Rock at the Pantin Hippodrome with Angel Face. In December, we self-organized the show I already mentioned in Crépy-en-Valois, situated about forty five miles northeast of Paris, with Loose Heart, Angel Face and Pain Head. In March 1977, we played the Palais des Glaces Punk Festival with Wayne County, the Jam, the Police and Generation X in Paris (parts of Robert Glassman's semi-legendary DIY documentary movie *Acceleration Punk* were shot at this event).

The same month, we recorded our first single. April 1st we played in Le Mans (120 miles



Stinky Toys, Winter 1976.

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west of Paris]. In May, we had a show at the Montparnasse Theater in Paris, and in June, we played for the wedding of Loulou de la Falaise, a famous model who worked a lot with Yves Saint Laurent, in the Bois de Boulogne [huge park on the west side of the French capital city, famous for its racecourse, the Roland-Garros tennis tournament and a major prostitution zone right next to Paris's richest neighborhoods]. In July, for the release of our single, we played five shows in London: the Vortex on the 18th, the Roxy on the 20th, and the Rock Garden between the 21st and the 23rd.

Were you welcome in London?

The 100 Club wasn't very warm to us, and I don't think we did such a great show. We were therefore quite surprised to see Elli on the front of the *Melody Maker*. The second time wasn't much better. The early novelty wore off pretty fast, and the London audiences snubbed us a bit. I guess they had seen it all before. Anyway, in September, we recorded our first self-titled album, nicknamed "the grey album," at the Ferber Studios, engineered by Patrick Chevalot.

Following its release, we played in Brussels (March 15, 16), in Lyon (17), then did a ten-day tour around the Provinces playing each night under a circus tent. On July 10th, 1978, we were part of a big festival taking place at the (famous) Olympia in Paris. *Le Rock d'Ici*. Asphalt Jungle, Bijou, Diesel, Electric Callas, Guilty Razors, Les Lou's, Marie & Les Garçons and Starshooter played [among many others bands not related to the Punk/New Wave scene]. In November, we played at the Rose Bonbon, a new Parisian rock club that had just opened. In December, we played in Rennes (Brittany), a gig booked by local scenester Etienne Daho [soon to become a successful pop singer]. On February 6th, 1979, we had a show at the Palais des Arts in Paris that was cut short thanks to a raid by the local Hell's Angels that sent an audience member to the hospital.

Between February and April, we recorded our second self-titled album, nicknamed

STINKY TOYS

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"the yellow album." It was followed by a few promotional shows between May and July, but by the end of the year, it was all over. It was the result of the success of Jacno's solo album, *Rectangle* [recorded in June, an all instrumental affair except for one track featuring Elli on vocals]. Stinky Toys were sold as the "big French punk band," which they were as far as attitude goes, but not really music-wise. The first album followed the classic rock pattern of bands like the Rolling Stones or the Who, but with a faster tempo. The second was way more open with touches of different things such as funk or bossa, with distortion-less guitars and songwriting closer to what was becoming known as New Wave (from now on a separate entity from Punk).

You have fond memories of some shows?

The early ones were pretty messy, the case for many bands especially back then. The band broke up when it was finally reaching its maturity. Our music was getting more original, and our performances had improved a lot. So my best memories on stage were from the final



Left: Stinky Toys on stage at L'Olympia, Paris, 1978. L to R: Albin, Elli, Hervé.

Below: Press ad for second album, 1979.

year, around the second album. The set at the Rose Bonbon, and the one at Le Palace (June '79) were especially magical. I also think we did a great concert in Lyon [just after the first long player].

All in all, you never toured that much...

Not much indeed. We didn't have the means, and would have needed a manager and a booker. The indie network was organized by the next generation of punk bands such as Bérurier Noir. There weren't that many places for us to play. Jacno, being very 'Parisian,' didn't fancy that much touring the Provinces in a van anyway.

Were you satisfied with the records?

The production on the first album is accurate to what the band sounded like at that point, Patrick Chevalot, the engineer, did a really good job. He worked again with Jacno later on. As far as the second album is concerned, we had to deal with Vogue's house sound engineers and they couldn't care less. And it was a first for Jacno in the seat of the producer. I found the sound of this record too weak, which is a shame because the songs are first rate. It's a good record that could have been great with a better production...

On that second album, you had guests: Michel Bellocq (1984) and especially Daniel Brunetti on sax, very present...

Michel had been invited because he was a friend but his technicality was also needed. Daniel played on a few songs and did a few shows with us. He had already played on "More Than Me" on the first album [and according to *Rock News* May 76 issue, he had already been honking on the band's very first demos]. He was playing with us (without ever being an official member) and Suicide Roméo at the same time. For a while, we practiced at his house in Antony [southern suburbs of Paris]. He had a little studio with a four-track on which we did a few demos including some of my own songs. I have no idea what became of those tapes.

How were relationships within the group?

We all have been friends since our adolescence. We had fun that's for sure. But there were tensions too. The 'Toys were Elli and Jacno's baby. Jacno was the main songwriter, pretty much the only one at first, Elli was in charge of the lyrics. For my part, it took me a while to feel at home. Like I said before, I was already involved in Loose Heart first; then I had some strife with the project. For instance, I didn't share Jacno and Elli's fascination with the '60s. It's not that I didn't like Françoise Hardy, Dutronc or the Who and the Stones, but I didn't like the concept of trying to do like in 1967 in 1977. And I was more into the Velvet and the Stooges anyway. This attraction for the '60s wasn't harmless either. It had been some kind of golden age, full of carelessness and superficiality, and it had been a golden age of the affluent society in the Western World. The end of the 1970s were the opposite, the end of the *Trente Glorieuses* [1945-1973, from the Marshall Plan to the first Oil Crisis], we were in a new era in which we started to be aware that the situation of crisis will be from now on permanent. Looking in the rear-view mirror stops you from apprehending the present and the future, resulting in those dreadful '80s. The same applies for those in 2018 obsessed with 1970s punk! [laughs]

So I was first of all there by friendship, which is the reason I'm not pictured on the first [and only] single. I wasn't crazy about the songs on the first album besides three or four good

ones like "Sun Sick," penned by Bruno. But the group got better and despite the weak production, I'm very proud of the second album.

I would add that Jacno had a strong personality, and he didn't have the spirit of a democrat... So he had a hard time bearing the inner workings of a group. After the break up, he found a way to make me pay for my dynamic drum style. On his later productions for which I was involved [Lio's "Amoureux solitaires" or Elli et Jacno's "Main dans la main"], Jacno turned out to be a complete control freak. For instance, he was obsessed with the fact that a part of the drum kit could be heard on another part's track. To avoid this "problem," I had to record every element of the kit separately. So a snare roll could be followed by a cymbal crash recorded an hour later. You can imagine the consequences of this method to the swing of the drums. In the end, I sounded pretty much like a drum machine. In retrospect and ironically, this created an element of aesthetic of this era, but it was also a way for Jacno to symbolically kill me.

You signed with Polydor right away. Did you choose to join a major label or did you also consider going with an independent like most the other bands on the Parisian scene did?

Jacno and Elli were reluctant to the idea of being associated with the Punk movement, even though they had the attitude. They really needed to be successful and had a fantasy of being stars. So being on a major was definitely fine with them. For the same reasons, they always refused to play the Gibus Club. They tended to refuse offers that didn't seem glamorous enough. In the end, it was not in the best interest of the group. Majors were surfing on the punk wave, but had no clue about what to do with bands like us. They were afraid about missing the next big thing, the next Dutronc or Hallyday...

But it's true that the band had been courted by some majors pretty early on. EMI wanted to sign us but gave up after we trashed one of their promo parties: for the release of Kraftwerk's *Trans Europa Express*, they booked a train full of press and show-biz people to go to Reims and have a lavish diner with champagne. The

"Toys were invited as future company artists; we drank all the way there while listening to Kraftwerk's sumptuous music played on the train; once there, we were pretty wasted, we disturbed the meal, Elli threw up (not totally by accident) on the floor in front of all the appalled guests... It was fun but it cost us the deal. Only the charming members of Kraftwerk



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kept their phlegm, even seemed to find all this quite amusing; I guess they'd seen it all before.

So we joined Polydor, who got rid of us fairly soon after our album because they were disappointed in the sales numbers. They sold about 10,000 albums, not much back then (probably a better score these days). Then we were signed to Vogue through Jacques Wolfson, father of Pierre Wolfson, Taxi Girl's first drummer, who died after ODing in 1981. Same story again, the sales were lower than expected and logically they dropped us too. A few years back, Elli made sure both albums got reissued on CD and later available for download. I have to thank her for that because for once these generated some (limited) income for me, something that hadn't happened often when it comes to being in The "Toys".

Was there any big career plan for the band or were you living from day to day?

No big plan. It was not the era for things like that. And like I said, we had no manager. So nobody above us to tell us what to do, and we were twenty years old. Albin, Bruno and I were still in college. Denis and Elli were the only ones who had taken a leap of faith, part courage and part carelessness I guess. So they needed some kind of success.

What was the background of the people you were hanging out with?

At this point, punk was a new trend that all the press was following. So it had impact on all kinds of youngsters with different backgrounds. In our circle of Parisian punks, we had working class kids like the Boulangers, Angel Face or La Souris Déglinguée, Pierre Cousseau and myself, we came from the middle class, Jacno's family were fallen bourgeois living in social housing in Le Marais, Albin's father was a well-off engineer, Elli's family were poor artists, Bruno's were artists too, but well-off. The second wave of punks in France was probably more blue-collar and politicized. They were also better organized with their network of independent clubs and record labels.

So, the end of the adventure...

It was mainly a question of lack of success. The band was fairly well-known; we had press, but too few sales. We didn't play enough, no manager, no more label. Albin went back to his studies (math). We had reached a dead end. So it's no surprise that Jacno's success with "Rectangle" killed the "Toys. Something Elli and myself regretted, at least for a while. We had slowly become a real band with a sound, cohesion on stage, and some good songs. But Jacno had a personality too strong to think "band." Elli and he started a duo, and he went solo, and became a producer.

Elli went solo too with the help of producer Ramuntcho Matta. She had a huge hit in 1986 with "Toi mon toi!" (You my roof). Bruno did a solo album produced by Jacno in 1983 (Hervé had played on his first solo single in 1980, "Je m'ennuie" (I'm bored)), he later played with Mirwais [Ahmadzai, of French new wave band Taxi Girl, and future producer of a few Madonna's records] in Juliette Et Les Indépendants, then he did background music for audiovisual media. Albin became a scientist, specialized in fluid mechanics.

For various reasons, I lost touch with everybody. Jacno died [2009, cancer], Albin got crazy, something like a right wing radical Catholic. And I don't talk to Elli for political reasons... [laughs]

Beside Françoise Hardy's "Je veux qu'il revienne" which later appeared on an Elli et Jacno compilation, were you doing any covers?

At the early shows, we used to do "Substitute" by the Who, and "Hang on to Yourself" from David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust*. [Rock News mag added the Shadows Of Knight's "Light Bulb Blues" to that list but Hervé has no recollection of playing it.]

How did you end up playing on Guilty Razors' seven-inch?

They were also on Polydor. The policy of majors then was often to sign a band they had hope for, and two or three similar bands they planned to more or less bury to make sure these won't get in the way of their new protégés. I believe that was the case for Guilty Razors, the "Toys being the band Polydor thought could be a success. So they were sent to record their single in the studio usually used for demo sessions. A cheaper option.

They started to record and I'm not sure but I guess they found the drum track not strong enough so their engineer called me to the rescue. It took one single afternoon. I had never played with them or heard the songs before. It went well and I have fond memories of that session. They were a good punk rock band, and nice chaps. They did a great cover of Pink Floyd's "Lucifer Sam". [alternate versions of Guilty Razors' "Provocate" and "Don't Wanna Be a Rich" with their actual drummer later appeared on Skydog's 1987 compilation *Les 30 Plus Grands Succès du Punk*.]

The "Toys went from a "punk" to a "new wave" sound: was it a conscious move?

As far as I'm concerned, it was a natural evolution as again I was more tuned with the USA than the UK. So even if the Velvets and the Stooges were my earliest major influences, I was more into Television or Talking Heads than the Clash or the Sex Pistols. My favorite French band of that era has always been Marquis De Sade, which were way more New Wave than Punk even in 1977.

So what did you do after the band was over?

Beyond being a drummer, I've always been trying to work on more personal projects with my own music. We started working on a record with lyrics by Jean-Louis Dupré (a.k.a. Loulou Picasso) and Olivia Clavel (a.k.a. Electric Clito) of Bazooka [a team of Parisian punk graphists],



Left: Calendar for opening month of Le Rose Bonbon club in Paris, featuring a lot of early French punk bands, October/November 1978.

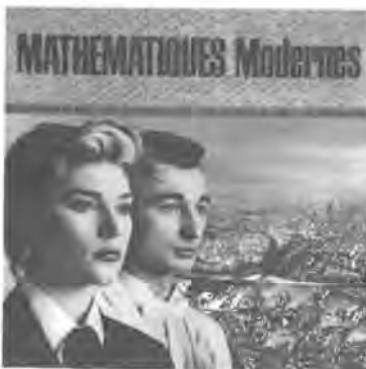
Right: Guilty Razors, 1977.



something that would have been not unlike Talking Heads or Brian Eno's early work. We recorded two songs at Ferber Studios but the label went under before we had time to do more. I also joined Modern Guy on drums for a few shows. Pierre Goddard recorded an album in Rennes. I played on it. A very good record that stayed on the shelf until it was finally released in 2016 credited to GYP as it was a common project with two members of Modern Guy, Guillaume Serp (vocals) and Yann Le Ker (guitar, keyboards). It was not far from Television musically, and members of Suicide Roméo and Marquis De Sade were involved too. [The album, released on vinyl, titled *S'il fait jour encore...* by Etic System and on CD credited to Guillaume Serp & Co by Ze Records; it also featured Pierre's brother and former Angel Face/84 Flesh/Suicide Roméo Fred "Goddard" Cousseau drumming on one song, Hervé playing on the others, and included a French adaptation of the Kinks' "Waterloo Sunset."]

You recorded with Mathématiques Modernes in 1980 and Spions [an art-punk band formed in Budapest, Hungary in 1977 before moving to Paris where they recorded one single in 1979]...

In both cases, these groups had no real existence outside the studios' walls—though Mathématiques Modernes did two songs at Le Palace for a Jacno solo show: I was playing drums for both that night. I was friends with Claude Arto (MM), and even more with Gregory Davidow of Spions, up to this day. For both sessions, they let me be free to elaborate my own drum patterns and those are my favorites of all the recordings which I've been involved back then. Mathématiques Modernes' album [*Les Visiteurs du Soir*, 1981] was quite ahead of its time, between Claude's composed material and Bruce Grant's sophisticated and jazzy arrangements for the strings and horns [Grant had played saxophone on former Gasoline's Alain Kan 1979 LP *What Ever Happened to Alain Z Kan?*]. Claude had very original ideas. He gave us the synthesizer tracks, and asked each musician to create his part, without knowing what the others were going to play. I'm not sure if he had chosen this method on purpose or just wasn't interested in being in control and trusting his collaborators (the exact opposite of Jacno's).



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Gregory Davidow, ca. 1980s.

I was especially enthusiastic about Spions. In 1981 [after already working together in 1979 on an EP credited to Spions Inc featuring Arto and members of post-punk band Artefact, *The Party*, issued on the Dorian label which also released Jacno's hit and Mathématiques Modernes' records], Gregory and I had worked on a bunch of songs. Unfortunately we only recorded two, in Polydor's demo studios, with some help from two guys from Modern Guy, Yann Le Ker and Jean-François Coen. Gregory had started in the performance art scene in Budapest in the mid '70s. He brought to punk a conceptual and strongly intellectual dimension. He had personality and a charismatic voice. And he wrote good lyrics, I was really impressed. Spions was a quite complex affair with a pioneering multimedia approach. Visual artist Laszlo Najmányi was part of the team. They had a mystical side too, not unlike Psychic TV in England. Gregory created his own church, *The Atheist Church - The Temple of Nuclear Reincarnation*: only members of Spions are followers. [Davidow is also behind the *Overnational Socialist Party* and the *Rock'n'Roll Hell of Fame*.]

Were you ever able to make a living as a drummer?

Never. I had the odd job as a youngster, while music was my main occupation, then music became more of a parallel life. In the early '80s, I moved to New York City for two years. The original idea was to join Gregory Davidow there to complete the record project we had started in Paris. Being a Hungarian political refugee, his administrative situation was complex. In the end, he got stuck in Canada where he still lives to this day, never being able to move to the United States. So I stayed two years, playing here and there but with no concrete plan. Nevertheless, I had a few great experiences like seeing Glenn Branca and his electric guitar orchestras.

I wasn't into the mainstream pop move of my friends, like Jacno, Elli or Lio, and not seeing any future in trying to become a session drummer for this kind of music, as soon as I was back in France I totally changed my life. I learned computer program-

ming and went to work in that area. Symbolically, my first employment contract was on January 1984. At the same time, I started to open my world to new music and got into different musical trainings, right up to today. Since mid-'80s, I had pretty much lived a double life. My first solo disc as a composer in 1999 was titled *Vies secondes* (Second Lives), the parallel meaning parallel but not separate. After spending the rest of the '80s in computer programming, in the '90s I moved into interactive devices (video disk, CD-Rom...) for communication and training. In 2000, I went back to college and in 2006 completed my doctorate on the interactions between images and sounds artistic hypermedia. The following year I got a position as a senior lecturer at the Toulon University (south of France) where I still work and teach in the fields related to art and culture digital creation.

As far as music is concerned, I learned to play the piano, harmonies, concrete music (a zarb [a Persian goblet drum also known as a bak]). I played drums again for a few recordings working for Ramuntcho Matta, Jean-François Coen, or French experimental musicians like Denis Frajerman and David Fenech. As a composer, I wrote music for CD-Roms, short movies (and one long), a theatre play, a puppet show. My musical tastes expanded greatly towards modern jazz (Charlie Mingus, Anthony Braxton, Art Ensemble of Chicago...) and contemporary music. Brian Eno and his Obscure Records label turned me on to minimalism. I listened to a lot of Steve Reich's work, same with John Cage. I really dug Cage's book *For the Birds* made of conversations with Daniel Charles. I love the work of Giacinto Scelsi, Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail, both associated with spectralism, György Ligeti, Luciano Berio, Iannis Xenakis, Glenn Branca, Fred Frith...

To those wondering how I went from punk and new wave to contemporary music (an avant-garde, I'd say it makes more sense than going towards French chanson and mainstream pop. There is the same inclination to be phase with one's time, to do your art with a business plan, same philosophy of D-I-Y self-production. Also, nowadays, even if there are still differences, the borders from one music scene to another are way more permeable than it was a few years back. You'll find con-



Jeune de Manhattan et d'insouciance, pieds nus dans l'herbe et fille d'un monde à la face du ciel bleu comme autour du zèbre et d'Alchimie. C'est le chemin de Gallinée, sauf qu'il n'y a pas de vent rock.

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Hervé Zénoûda, August 2018.



posers in contemporary music assimilating the energy of rock in their work. People like Fausto Romitelli. Some incorporate noise in their music, I'm thinking of Franck Bedrossian or Raphael Cendo. And people like Glenn Branca and Fred Frith came from a rock background. All these influences didn't really turn me into a serious composer in the field of contemporary music, I'm still pretty much a self-educated musician, but it definitely changed my ways of thinking and producing music.

I worked as a producer for the trAce Label for ten years. I made two albums with them, *Vies secondes* in 1999 and *Demain, dès l'aube...* (Tomorrow, by dawn) in 2002. I produced a few records of electro-acoustic music by Michèle Bokanowski and Christine Groult, a compilation of contemporary minimalist composers (*Post-Minimalism 4 Countries - 19 composers* in 2007), and a tribute to Moondog. I made a third CD in Italy in 2005 (*Notes et fragments*) and an album of experimental songs with Elisa Point in 2006 (*Leçons de chagrin... cours de joie de vivre* - lessons in sorrow... joy of living class). I also had a band for a while, around the time of my first album in 1999, Sonarium, with Marc Charmet on piano, Alain Petit on violin and Thomas Petit on prepared guitar. We did a few shows in Paris but broke up within a couple of years because some members didn't get along. I then went back to the conservatoire for years of studying in writing music and electroacoustic. I'm still following some new composers such as Sébastien Roux, Pierre-Yves Macé, Bérangère Maximin...

If anyone wants to listen to some of my latest work, I have a Bandcamp page: zenouda.bandcamp.com/music. And my website is zenouda.free.fr.



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Hervé Zénoûda: A Selected Discography



STRIKE UP

"Strike up" on *DANGER: LA FRANCE A PEUR* (Danger, 2016)

ANGEL FACE

A WILD ODYSSEY (Pacific Production, 1985)
Hervé is credited as Straight Finger.

LOOSE HEART

PARIS 1976 EP (Danger, 2014)
FRESNES LIVE 76 (Mémoire Neuve, 2018)

STINKY TOYS

Boozy Creed / Driver Blues (Polydor, 1967)
S/T (a.k.a. The Grey Album) (Polydor, 1977)
"Plastic Faces" (live) on *LE ROCK D'ICI A L'OLYMPIA* (Pathé Marconi/EMI, 1978)
S/T (a.k.a. The Yellow Album) (Vogue, 1979)
"Lonely Lovers" (alt version) and "Je veux qu'il revienne" on Elli et Jacno's *INÉDITS 77-81* (Vogue, 1981) The second song was originally recorded in 1964 by the Vernon Girls in English ("Only You Can Do It") and Françoise



Hardy in French; Hardy recorded also a version in English, released in 1965.

GUILTY RAZORS

Provocate / Hurts & Noises / I Don't Wanna Be a Rich (Polydor, 1978)

SPIONS INC.

THE PARTY 12-inch EP (Dorian, 1979)

MATHÉMATIQUES MODERNES

Disco Rough / A + B = C (Dorian, 1980)
LES VISITEURS DU SOIR (Dorian, 1981)

SOLO

VIES SECONDES (trAce Label, 1999)
DEMAIN, DES LAUBE... (trAce Label, 2002)
NOTES ET FRAGMENTS (Experience, 2005)
LEÇONS DE CHAGRIN... COURS DE JOIE DE VIVRE w/Elisa Point (Le Culte du Cargo, 2006)



