

The Axemen: 1983 – Present

The Axemen were formed when Steve McCabe and Bob Brannigan (Cardy), playing at the Empire Tavern in Dunedin as 'The Twins' supporting Bill Direen's Above Ground outfit, which featured Stuart Page and Maryrose Wilkinson (then a couple). Upon hearing the pair playing, Page was unable to resist leaping onto the stage and playing bongoes, and the Axemen legacy was born. Highlights of the recording of this evening was immortalised in the first 'classical' Axemen recording 'Equinox' which was later released as a cassette in a garish screenprinted 12"LP cover.

Prior to this time, Steve and Bob had spent a couple of years playing occasionally live, and recording and releasing tapes together and individually as ad-hoc one-off cassettes, and later as catalog items on Steve's Sleek Bott label (<http://sleekbott.com>). As Bob lived in Dunedin and Steve lived in Christchurch at the time and there was no Internet, ideas exchange was by post, yet eery parallels appeared in their recordings, causing Steve to comment on the 'Vulcan voice-meld' and ears to bristle.

Quickly adopting the moniker of Stu Kawowski, Page quickly became an integral member, adding not only rhythmic logic to the sound but bringing a more visual aspect to the band, in the form of self-promotion, posters, graffiti, etc.

In 1985, the Axemen rented out the State Trinity Centre in central Christchurch and recorded the seminal '3 Virgins' double LP with a smorgasbord of local musician friends which was the first of 3 releases for Flying Nun.

The '3 Virgins' album has since been cited as 'hugely influential' by many US underground acts and attracted the interest of Tom Lax, SiltBreeze Records (<http://siltbreeze.com>), starting a long-term relationship with the Philadelphia label which continues to this day, with SiltBreeze re-releasing '3 Virgins' in 2011, and two Sleek Bott releases (1983's 'Big Cheap Motel' and 1987's 'Scary!'), and facilitating the Axemen in organising their hugely successful 2009 US tour with SiltBreeze stablemates Times New Viking.

Of the many members who have played with the Axemen over this period (see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Axemen), Serbian guitar impresario Dragan Stojanovic became a semi-permanent fixture; after meeting them at a busking festival in Whangarei, Stojanovic featured prominently on their second Flying Nun release 'Derry Legend', recorded in Wellington at the Skeptics Writhe Studios and engineered by Nick Roughan [*Stu was later to record the notorious 'AFFCO' video with the band which caused a ripple with its real slaughterhouse depictions, and appeared on the final 'Radio With Pictures' show, widely interpreted as a finger up to the TVNZ establishment who cancelled the show*].

Flying Nun later released a compilation 'Best-of' CD 'Peter Wang Pud' featuring highlights from '3 Virgins' and 'Derry Legend' with new artwork and 16-page insert.

Note: *The Axemen are about to embark on their first Australasian Tour in December 2011. With Bob Brannigan / Cardy having left the band permanently, the touring lineup consists of Steve McCabe, Stu Kawowski, Dragan Stojanovic and newcomer William Daymond (Terror of the Deep, The Pickups, etc.). In conjunction with one of the promoters a limited edition tour single 'The Nutsacker Suite' will be released on 9 December.*

Flying Nun Releases (1985-1990):

1986: 3 Virgins (Double LP in full color gatefold cover)

1987: Derry Legend (LP)

1990: Peter Wang Pud (Compilation CD)

<http://flyingnun.co.nz>

SiltBreeze Re-Releases (2008-2011):

2008: Big Cheap Motel (LP, Sleek Bott 1983)

2009: Scary! (Double LP, Sleek Bott 1989)

2011: 3 Virgins

<http://siltbreeze.com>

Sleek Bott CDs:

pls refer:

<http://sleekbott.com/sleekbott/music.cfm>

Web References:

<http://theaxemen.org>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Axemen

Discogs:

<http://www.discogs.com/release/1432911>

<http://www.discogs.com/release/1426662>

<http://www.discogs.com/release/1444841>

<http://www.discogs.com/Various-Noisyland/release/1379578>



Axemen, c. 1983 (L-R) Bob Brannigan, Steve McCabe, Stu Kawowski



Axemen, c. 2011 (L-R) Stu Kawowski, Dragan Stojanovic, Steve McCabe, William Daymond