

Fred MG | 3rd February 2022

PARTY DAY



SORTED!

Party Day Sorted!

Optic Nerve

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We're getting quite a few compilations of lesser-spotted 1980s post-punk in at the moment.

There could be a number of reasons for this. Maybe the climate is ripe for this sort of thing, or certain nostalgia cycles are waxing at the moment, or perhaps it's simply that lockdowns have allowed people more time to dig around in the annals of their long-forgotten projects. Whatever the reason, [Party Day](#)'s new anthology 'Sorted!' comes off the back of similarly comprehensive re-appraisals of the work of acts such as [The Stick Figures](#) and [Getting The Fear](#).



I'm glad for this recent movement. The decade or so after [The Slits](#), [The Clash](#) and the rest started doing their thing really did seem to have limitless potential when it came to spawning interesting new musical units.

In many ways, Party Day were exemplary of their time. This lot were a hard-working bunch who made enough noise to get noticed far beyond their South Yorkshire home. They dabbled with labels like [PIAS](#), but the band put all their major work out through their own eponymous imprint. In the context of new [Optic Nerve](#) collection 'Sorted!', that was probably a good thing - I'd imagine retaining some/all of the rights made it far easier to cobble together the tracks from the singles, EP and pair of albums which Party Day issued between 1983 and 1986 (though it should be noted that, due to available space, not all of those tunes make the cut for the vinyl editions here).

This lot were generally understood as a goth band at the time, and it's easy to see how those who were beguiled by [The Cure's 'Pornography'](#) when it dropped in 1982 might have picked up on Party Day in the slipstream of that LP. Tracks like 'Athena' are on edge, the band somehow managing to make music which sounds both fidgety and ominous, airy. The feeling is ramped up further on 'The Spider', a cut which is a good example of that sort of campy, crunchy chomp which a lot of groups were delivering post-[Birthday Party](#) (as I type this, it occurs to me that the Party Day name might be a nod to [Cave](#), [Harvey](#) et al).



It's the vocals of Carl Firth which at once glue 'Sorted!' together and also cement it as a fine period-piece. The way in which Firth chatters away atop these tracks can file Party Day's music down to a point, but he's also unafraid to drop the listener into open space. He'll howl a

chorus on one song, but on the next he'll riddle us from the corner - see how, on 'Boredom', his vocals nip between the guitars with pregnant talk of money and parachutes.

They may be goth up front, but one of the things that 'Sorted!' reveals is how the backbone of Party Day's music often harnessed the exploratory edge of the age. It's easy to see how heads would have been turned at the time by the band's debut double-A, 1983's 'Row the Boat Ashore'/'Poison'. The wind may whip around these tracks, but at points - particularly at the open and close of the latter cut - we detect a bit of shuffle in the rhythm section which feels almost dubbed-out.

I highly doubt 'Sorted!' will be the last archival collection of some small but crucial act to land in our stockroom in 2022. As long as the standard is maintained, I say bring them on.



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