

Bronski Beat are a London-based electro-funk trio who take their monicker from a character in the novel The Tin Drum. This is about the sanest piece of information you're likely to get out of them, but just for the record, here goes...

Jimi Somerville, Larry "Laz" Steinbachek, and Steve Bronski have been playing together for about a year now, gigging around London, building up a devoted following, and assaulting the top of the British and European charts with hugely popular back-to-back hits, "Smalltown Boy" and "Why?" Jimi sings (squeals, he puts it), writes most of the lyrics and plunks out a couple of melodies on the synth. Laz and Steve write and arrange the music and give Jimi a hard time. Most of the songs are written in Jimi's tiny bedroom high up in a Camberwell tower block where they all crowd in with the Yamaha DX7, Memory Moog, Linn Drum, etc., and drive the neighbors to distraction.

Jimi, who'll be 23 in June, was born and raised in Glasgow and left North Kelvinside Comprehensive School at 16 -- a "thicko," he claims. He spent a miserable two years working in a paint factory then migrated to London and more misery selling kitchen accessories and do-it-yourself products in department stores. He got sacked from his next job as apprentice baker for sleeping in the ovens after strenuous nights at the disco dancing to Donna Summer, Gloria Jones, Northern Soul (classic dance/soul) Records, and (his biggest fave) Sylvester. That was his last job, and he barely survived thereafter courtesy of the ever frugal British welfare. He met his flatmate Connie at this time who introduced him to a new toy -- the video camera. They worked on the award winning educational video, "Framed Youth," a hilarious and moving series of interviews with teenagers on their experiences with their families, lovers and the law. The video includes a song written and sung (unaccompanied) by Jimi called "Screaming" - the result of other project members hearing Jimi sing along to Connie Francis and suggesting he write a song for them. This showed great courage on their part, and it worked. Larry and Steve heard it, liked it, and set it to music. They played Jimi the tape they had made, and the three of them started Bronski Beat "for a laugh".

Steve (nicknamed Stella Stagefright) also comes from Glasgow. Born in 1960, his last school was Smithycroft Secondary - "by the prison"-- where he was tragically forced to wear a tie. This

provoked him to "dog it" (play truant) most of the time, and he got a job as part-time stagehand at the Glasgow Apollo, where he blossomed into a dedicated groupie. He travelled to London for short periods working as a laborer, a knife grinder (!) and even joining up with the Hare Krishnas for one week. With them, he developed a healthy aversion to indoctrination and a fetish for short hair! In his early years, he was a committed heavy metal fan, but his taste has mutated through Roxy Music, Giorgio Morodor, and George Clinton to Simple Minds, David Byrne and a passion he shares with Jimi for Connie Francis and Peggy Lee.

Larry, who with a bit of pushing admits to 24, was born in London and brought up in Southend, is a bit of a wag. "My major influences are Throbbing Gristle, Anita Harris and Martin Denny, and I'd like to see all forms of oppression destroyed by the socialist hordes. I'm a Taurus." After leaving school, he worked as a pastry cook, but spent his spare time building synthesizers from kits -- a talent he inherited from his dad, an inventive electrician. He moved up to London when he was 20 to work for British Telecom, which he hated but stuck to for three years. He was living in Brixton with Gill, the designer of their first single sleeve, when Anthony Kawalski, an old friend from Southend and now their manager, introduced him to Steve. By that time, he'd sensibly saved some money which he spent on musical equipment. He resigned from his job and started collaborating with Steve and Anthony (originally the third member of the group) on experiments with music and video. Shortly afterwards, they heard Jimi's song, but most especially his unique voice. The magic of their subsequent rehearsals together confirmed the current format, so Anthony was relegated to manager.

Since their first gig in the summer of '83, at the Bell in King's Cross, they've played at least one gig a month at their favorite venue, The Fridge in Brixton, as well as appearances at the Asylum, South Bank Poly, The Venue (as support to Tina Turner) and The Oxford Roadshow, among many others.

Bronski Beat signed to London Records and released their disturbingly good single, "Small Town Boy," a song about the loneliness that smalltown life can bring upon teenage shoulders.

Bronski Beat's second single, "Why?," also climbed to the pinnacle of the U.K. and European charts, paving the way for the debut album, The Age Of Consent, and their introduction to America via MCA/London Records. If anticipation is any gauge, the colonies will also fall prey to the Bronskis and their unique sound, and we can all look forward to a tour here by the trio in early 1985.



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