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'JUST GOT LUCKY' JOBBOXERS INTERVIEW

By Dave Dawson

JobBoxers' body of work through the 1980s melded a contemporary vibrancy with 60s and 70s inspirations and sounds as fresh today as it did upon its original release. With the recent Cherry Red Records release; the 3CD retrospective *Just Got Lucky* enjoying much acclaim, Blitzed Magazine's Dave Dawson chatted with self-confessed 'Keeper of The Flame' bassist Chris Bostock, and guitarist Rob Marche about their journey.

Thanks so much for this. It must be heartening seeing the incredible reaction to the recent retrospective. Were you at all surprised by it?

Chris: "Personally, I'm not that surprised by the success of our new box set, *Just Got Lucky - The Complete Works 1983-1986*, as many hardcore fans pushed for its release for years. Many of the tracks included were intended to be the next two albums, following on from our debut album *Like Gangbusters* and its hit singles: 'Boxerbeat', 'Just Got Lucky' and 'Johnny Friendly'. But business tangles put a stop to *Skin & Bone*, then the band splitting up put a stop to *Missing Link*. I was determined that the world would finally hear this work so, for me, I now just see it as a very delayed

release! It has taken me years to finally get it released, so I'm elated that the endless hard work has paid off and 'The Complete Works' is now available for all to hear and enjoy."

Rob: "Yes, at the back of your mind you ask yourself who would be interested, but after the great reception that we got when we last did live dates, it is a nice surprise."

Did you find any treasure in the attic when compiling it, or was all the material just as you remembered it?

Chris: "We all had listening copies of the tracks on cassette tapes, from before the digital age, so the tracks were always with us, heart and soul, but the challenge to get them released was enormous. First, I had to convince the band to agree to release them, then find all the original master tapes when nobody knew where they had ended up, then have them digitized, restored, mastered and, in many cases, remixed. It's a miracle! I found some in Sony's vault, then tracked down all the second album's mixes to Hansa Studios, Berlin, where we originally recorded them... whilst the last three multi-tracks were unearthed in the loft of our friend Stuart Matthewman of Sade, who had been looking after them for us. It wouldn't

have been possible without all of these finds. Also, a huge thanks goes to mix engineer Steve Hume and audio restoration and mastering specialist Mike Coe. Without their dedicated work, it would never have happened."

Rob: "Pretty much as I remembered it, but I had never heard the live recording."

Your sound was very driven. Do you think your punk sensibilities, honed as Subway Sect, injected an urgency and vitality into JobBoxers?

Chris: "Absolutely. We all grew up through the punk era, which necessitated diving in and getting things done quickly, and also putting all the sounds and grooves you love into the melting pot and playing the result with conviction. Subway Sect were inspired by a '40s/'50s Swing style where I used electric bass for practicality, rather than double bass. We're all into Northern Soul, Motown, Groove and 60s Jazz/Rhythm & Blues so these are some of the ingredients in the mix."

Rob: "I think that came from our various bands in Bristol and New York pre-Subway Sect."

When I was at school you were loved by the rude boys, casals, New Romantics and even the punks and metal heads.

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We've had numerous offers from promoters

That was very rare. You seemed to straddle many disparate genres without being pigeonholed in any of them.

Chris: "That's good to hear. There was that succession of prominent genres in the UK leading on from punk into New Wave, then Ska, then Rockabilly, that the audiences had absorbed. These all had an influence to some extent. We already had our own brand of Swing from Subway Sect, while Dig had pioneered the new Rockabilly movement in New York, so you can hear all those influences in the music. Yes, it's a blend of many genres. When we formed, we brought all our influences to the table, but Dig's versatility and virtuosity enabled him to sing and perform all of them. It was a perfect match and brought out the best in the band in both song-writing music and musicianship. I love Motown and Funk, Rob's forte is clean, precise guitar, both 60s and Funk, Dave's keyboard style is jazzier. Sean's drumming is Northern."

Rob: "Yes, again that came from our different musical past experiences I believe."

Like Dexys and The Specials, you exuded an air of a unified front for a creative cause. Do you think Bernie Rhodes recognised that in you?

Chris: "Yes, it's all about teamwork. All for one and one for all. Create a new scene, do it well and captivate. Bernie supported this. His view is always to go against the grain, push the boundaries and reject the mainstream; to find our own style and ignore current trends. Unite as one, and you get the synergy that a singer/songwriter with pickup musicians can never come close to. Bernie managed us during the Subway Sect era and the early JoBoxers. He then returned

to managing the Clash, so we found our own way from then on."

Rob: "Definitely, the unified front came from shared hardship. Bernie liked to test people to see what they were made of, but for most of JoBoxers time Bernie was in the states with The Clash."

'Just Got Lucky' was huge worldwide. How did its success affect you?

Chris: "'Just Got Lucky' made No. 6 in the UK, the US Top 40 and also charted in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Europe, so we performed it on numerous live TV shows and tours in the UK, US and Australia. It is very popular live as you might expect and featured in the movies: The 40-Year-Old Virgin and Just My Luck among others. It also appeared on numerous compilation albums. Seeing so many bands and singers performing it online feels heartening and is an honour. You know you've written a gem when so many bands cover it."

Rob: "It was 'hang onto your hats' time. Looking back, I think that I would have enjoyed it more if I had been a bit older."

Your diversity has definitely been displayed in all of your projects since. Last year's new single 'A Thorn in My Side' hit number 11 in the Heritage Chart. In the wake of that, do you have anything else planned?

Chris: "For the promo video of 'A Thorn in My Side', I worked with creatives Mark Jay, Jamie Petrie, Amy McCrellis and Sarah Strickett using vintage JoBoxers video footage, animations and individual clips of Northern Soul JoBoxers fans dancing to the track. It reached No.11 and stayed on the chart for over 14 weeks. A promo video for another new



JoBoxers 1985 Classic Suits

track is on hold due to conflicting work priorities. We've had numerous offers from promoters for us to play festivals and big headline shows but the band are dispersed around the globe with other interests, so logistics and economics come into it. Getting them all to agree and match up free time is an endless puzzle. Fortunately, feelings and commitments change frequently, so I'd like to think live events will happen again with a new promo video. In the meantime, Just Got Lucky - The Complete Works 1983-1986 remains a Cherry Red Records top seller."

Rob: "By the time I got to Earl Brutus (90s indie rock band featuring Nick Sanderson, and Jamie Fry (brother of Martin Fry and formerly of World of Twist), I decided that I would make the music that I loved and was determined to regret nothing. As for live dates, I nailed my flag to the mast after our last live dates- which I was initially reluctant to do but after experiencing the joy for the audience and ourselves - I changed my mind. We have received some righteous offers, but it takes all five of us to agree to proceed." ■

JoBoxers' Just Got Lucky 3CD digipak collection is available from www.cherryred.co.uk



Credit Ashley Greb