

Q&A

Heaven 17



Photo: Tracey Welch

Glenn Gregory, right, Heaven 17

Heaven 17's *Penthouse And Pavement Live In Concert* 2-DVD is out via www.heaven17.com, taking in 19 tracks from Sheffield Arena, March 2010, plus behind-the-scenes in Abbey Road, rehearsals, a making-of, and clips, totalling over five hours. RC quizzed front-man **Glenn Gregory about the band's other plans.**

I hear you're playing *The Devil's Arse*?!

Yes, the cave [in Derbyshire]. Richard Hawley's manager's a friend of Martin Ware – both Sheffield Wednesday fans. And Richard played there last Christmas. So Heaven 17 up *The Devil's Arse* was too good to miss! We'll record it – as we do every

Typically, they weren't marked, and we thought, 'shit! This could be the stuff we did in Sheffield'. And it turned out to be. We baked them for five days in a pizza oven in the basement of Abbey Road. I don't think there's anything of *The Luxury Gap*, but then again, until we start looking, we don't know. So let's see when we call them up.

Do you have tapes from before *Heaven 17*?

Yeah. There's a legendary gig we did in one of our pop-up bands, VDK & The Studs, supporting The Drones at art college in Sheffield. It was mad – we got pulled off stage, in a chaotic state, but we did about an hour of raw, avant-garde electronic music, and I heard there was

pressing for £5 and I had to have it, even though I don't have a deck – so beautiful! I still buy CDs – the last was Black Eyed Peas' *The End*, but it's mostly downloads.

What was the first record you bought?

Embarrassingly, one of those *Top Of The Pops* hits albums. But the first by an artist was Roxy Music *Pyjamarama* – the record that made me think, 'fuckin' hell! That's what I want to do'.

Do you have time to listen to music?

Yeah, on the MP3, and my seven year old boy's got good taste, oddly enough (*laughs*), so I listen to his new dance music and the delights of Justin Bieber, who I'm weaning

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night. I don't like the idea of going down a hole, and the closer it gets, the more I'm thinking, 'oh shit! I hope I bloody can'.

Any plans for a future album?

We've got a few bits and bobs, tunes, and if someone came and said, 'here's some money to do an album', we'd probably do it. Some people are showing an interest. But it'd take six months. We all need to make money and do other things, so it'd have to pay. Watch this space.

Is there anything unreleased in the vaults?

We looked for the eight-track demos of *Penthouse And Pavement*, but Virgin couldn't find them. But we called for everything from the stores to have a listen to everything before the tour, and we found three one-inch tape boxes, and we were like, 'what are they?'

a tape and managed to track down the guy who recorded it on cassette through Facebook. He's in Australia, and he said, 'yes, I had it. But everything's in boxes and I've no idea where it is'. So it does exist, and I said, 'if you do find it, I'd really be interested in owning it'.

Did you have a favourite record shop back in the day?

Yeah, we used to go to Rare & Racy in Sheffield all the time and pick up loads of records. The same guy still owns it and it's amazing – early German electronic and far-out whacky stuff. I got everything of David Bowie up to *The Lodger*, but I got rid of my vinyl and memorabilia, as I'm a minimalist. I only kept an Ivor Cutler album, a double Barry White, and a white noise album, electronic progressive, though I was in Oxford the other day and saw *The Man Who Sold The World* first

him off (*laughs*).

What would you ask your music hero?

Bowie – how did you constantly manage to reinvent yourself? Incredibly exotic and exciting. There's always people pushing the envelope, like Black Eyed Peas. Will.I.Am is a genius – I'd like to work with him.

What about you would surprise fans?

Most songs I write now are on acoustic guitar, and the old songs sound great, like early Bowie. I'd like to do country and western too, but Martin used to put my country CDs in the microwave. Where's my CD? You bastard! In the microwave again! (*laughs*) But I used to do drawings and notes in the studio and at the end of each album I'd burn them. That drives Martin mad! (*laughs*)