

Who are the Blaggers? By Matty Blag

The Blaggers first started rehearsing mid-1988. At that point in time they intended to call themselves Peasant Army, after an early Red Skins single. By the time of their first gig (at the LMS in Hendon) they had a short but solid set with a few cover versions, namely the Ramones "Blitzkrieg Bop" Complete Control's "Get Out of Ireland" and the Animal's "House of the Rising Sun", but all had been changed lyrically and musically to the Blaggers own dynamic style. The first ever line up of Blaggers was: Vocals - Matty Blag and Bilko, Guitar - Serious Steve, Bass - Matt Vinyl, Drums - Jezz the Jester. This line up appears on the first album "On Yer Toez" which came out on Roddy Moreno's Oi Records.

In those early days getting gigs was hard work no one seemed to want to know the band except Cable Street Beat the anti-fascist organisation. CSB quite often let the Blaggers support the likes of bigger bands at the time like: The Price, The Neurotics and Attila the Stockbroker and from this they started to pick up a small anti-fascist following. By the bands 8th gig they were supporting the Angelic Upstarts at the Sir George Robey in North London. This gig was a very important event in London. It was the first British gig the Upstarts had played after being attacked by the fascist music organisation Blood and Honour.

Blood and Honour thought that was the end of the Upstarts, they reckoned that they could do whatever they wanted in London but Mensi, Red Action, Anti-Fascist Action and CSB had other ideas, the fight back against these fascist bastards would start here. After a major picket of a shop that sold Nazi merchandise in Carnaby Street and a jam packed gig by the Upstarts and Blaggers which went ahead without any trouble, Anti fascists in London started to take the fight to the fascists. People started to realise that it's got to be done before the threat of fascism was too strong. This fight is still going on today and must continue as long as the Nazi scum inflict their filth upon this society.

At the very next gig the Blaggers came up against the face of fascism once again. In the Midlands, the band got attacked by a mob of bone heads during the set. We had no other choice but to defend ourselves along with our road crew at the time, who of course did not mess around. All the band were held on violent disorder charges along with a couple of our roadies. A year on from this incident, all charges were dropped but what happened that night brought it home to the band what being an anti-fascist was really all about, Jezz left the band" Cab, a friend of the band, then joined and became the drummer (early 1989) The next major step in the bands career was playing the EX club in Berlin with Belgium band Comrade. I remember seeing a guy with The Blaggers - On Yer Toez written on the back of his leather jacket. We didn't even realise On Yer Toez was on sale in Germany! Cab never featured on a record with the band but did appear on some early demos of Its Up To You, Victory to the ANC and Beirut.

By the time of the next release the line-up had changed again. Bilko had left the band due to being unable to spend enough time rehearsing. Jason (Wrist action Jackson) became the new drummer and Gary the Squatter became the rhythm guitarist, Gary was also in a band called "Under the Gun" at the time and only stayed with the Blaggers for a few gigs and made a 7" EP which was called "It's Up To You" and is featured on this album. This EP was a one off deal on Network 90 records and only 1000 were pressed which is why we decided to put it out on this record. The best gigs I remember this line up playing was at the Duchess of York in Leeds with Crane and Snuff, and at Nolan's bar in East London with the Cowboy Killers and Abolition. Brendon H (AKA Mr H) also appears on the B side of Its Up To You EP, on the song called Meat. It was his idea that we changed our name to Blaggers ITA.

The start of 1991 saw the band on the 3rd short tour of Germany (around gig number 60) with a new second guitarist Paul the Pig from Trench Fever who was just standing in at first but then decided to become a full time member. This tour of Germany was by far the best to date. All the profits were going to the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign and nearly every gig was packed. Hanover being the highlight of the tour with us playing and encore nearly as long as the set. Also during this tour we got to go and see FC St Pauli for the first time. It was a really good experience seeing a football ground full of anti-fascists.

On returning from Germany, Vince of Released Emotions Records and Karl of Words of Warning records contacted me, the result of this was a track on a couple of compilation albums. We did The Guns of Brixton for Vince's album "The Never Ending Story" (A Clash tribute) and our own song "New York" for WOW's first compilation album Mind Pollution. The line up on these records was as it is today: Vocals - Matty, Guitar - Serious Steve, Bass - Matt Vinyl, Drums - Jason (Wrist action Jackson) and additional backing vocals and ranting by Christie, Christie became our manager after the German tour, he had many ideas for the band, including backing tapes scratching and rapping so we were willing to let him have a go. He also started coming on stage during the set with tambourines, maracas which often took the punk rock style audience by surprise.

Our next release was a bit of a step back in time. The "Beirut" single on Nightmare Records featured mainly stuff we used to do around late 1990 "What For", "Real World" and "Wonderful World" and a 'live version of "10 Years On" recorded at the Fulham Kings Head the B-Side. One side of this album is live it was recorded through the PA at Leicester YMCA mid-way through 1991, bands also playing that crowd seem really small. This was one the better recorded gigs around this time but we intend our next live album due out next year (1992) to be even better.

The next memorable gig we did was in Rome our 81st and we were facing 5,000 people. Ok it was supporting the Angelic Upstarts but still it was pretty mind blowing playing that gig. At the end both us and the Upstarts played extended

versions of "Who Killed Liddle Towers", "White Riot" and "Guns of Brixton". We really owe a big thanx to all those at Giridalo Forte from Rome for letting us play that gig.

The next step on from here was a mini album un WOW called "Blaggamuffin" which came out in November 1991 and featured new songs called "Pitbull Mentality" and "Bastard Chilling" along with a remix of the "Guns of Brixton" and others. We felt that was our best studio recording to date and hope you'll check it out.

The band are just back from a short UK tour to promote this album which was a great success where we made many new friends and our record went out to a new audience. We are also looking forward to coming over to Germany again sometime in 1992 and hope to see you there, I hope you enjoy this record as much as we enjoyed making it.

Gegen Nazis! The only good fascist is a dead fascist!

Blaggers ITA

Matty Blag
