

THE WEDDING PRESENT

Biography

"The boy Gedge has written some of the best love songs of the Rock 'n' Roll Era. You may dispute this, but I'm right and you're wrong!" John Peel.

The Wedding Present have had eighteen UK Top 40 hit singles... not bad for a band that has, from its inception, stubbornly refused to play the record industry's game. In 1985 David Lewis Gedge boarded a National Express coach in London with 500 records packed into a pair of his mother's suitcases and, in this fashion, the band's debut single GO OUT AND GET 'EM BOY! was delivered to the distribution company, and The Wedding Present was born. That pioneering spirit has been at the core of the band's philosophy ever since. From GEORGE BEST, "an unmitigated delight" [NME], the first full-length release on their own Reception Records onwards, the band has charted an appealing, if often eccentric, course of its very own.

With their early releases The Wedding Present had acquired a reputation for bittersweet, breathtakingly honest love songs immersed in whirlwind guitars, so it was extraordinary that UKRAINSKI VISTUPI V JOHNA PEELA, with the band exploring traditional Eastern European folk music, should be their major label debut on RCA. "(They) carry off what is basically a bold experiment with verve" [NME]. However, this was soon followed by the more traditionally incendiary BIZARRO, "simply unbeatable" [Melody Maker] which featured their first hit single KENNEDY.

The next step, made with characteristically twisted Wedding Present logic, was to enlist noise-mongering [and, at that point, relatively unknown] sound engineer Steve Albini's aid at a time when everyone else was releasing 'Madchester' dance mixes. The resulting SEAMONSTERS, recorded in the snowy wilds of Minnesota in just 11 days, suggested a more thoughtful Wedding Present. The Guardian newspaper noted that: "Albini has given The Wedding Present considerable weight, with Gedge's voice trickling between banks of scowling guitars". Indeed, the singing ranged from sensual whispering to feverish screams.

The band came up with their next intriguing idea in 1992. By the end of December, The Wedding Present had released twelve singles, one per month, equalled Elvis Presley's 35 year old record for "most hits in one year", rekindled everyone's interest in that ultimate pop format, the 7" and led the NME to describe the band as "casually revolutionary and underhandedly unique". A gang of impressive names, including Ian Broudie from The Lightning Seeds and legendary Rolling Stones producer Jimmy Miller collaborated on the industry-challenging project, ultimately to be compiled on the two HIT PARADE albums and awarded "record of the week" by Tony Parsons in The Daily Telegraph.

WATUSI, produced by Steve Fisk (a prime mover in the celebrated avant-garde scene of Seattle), whisked the band off into another new area with its lo-fi pop, three-part a capella harmonies and Waikiki-ready surf strains. This "strong, multifaceted album" [Select], sprinkled with 60s and 70s pastiches, was described by critics as their most varied and dynamic to date. "Watusi is (their) 'White Album', a re-assessment of their sound that finds them doing what they do best" [Melody Maker].

The band returned to England to record their next release, the car themed MINI, "a gem of a record" [Melody Maker] in which Gedge cloaked his tales of love, lust and infidelity with automobile symbolism. To commemorate this release, the band played [with two drummers!] at the BBC's Sound City Event, which was held that year in Leeds. During the concert, the winner of a prize draw was announced, and a lucky Wedding Present fan became the owner of a real life classic Austin Mini motor car provided by the band and delivered by David Gedge himself!

The follow-up, self-produced album, SATURNALIA was again released to a flurry of critical approval. The NME exclaimed that "David Gedge has just written one of the best pop albums

of the year” while The Melody Maker noted that in the new recordings, which were completed in the London studios belonging to The Cocteau Twins, you could “hear an experimentalism that would send half of New York back to the lab”.

It was at this point in 1997 that Gedge started work on a new project called CINERAMA in which he indulged his love of film music from John Barry to Ennio Morricone. Cinerama started life as a duo [Gedge and his girlfriend Sally Murrell] together with a shifting line-up of collaborators. 1998’s VA VA VOOM “turbo-driven melodies and bittersweet vignettes taking in everything from John Barry to the Zombies” [The Times] featured The Church’s Marty Wilson-Piper and Emma Pollock from The Delgados. Following its release, Gedge recruited the rhythm section of the disbanded Goya Dress (Terry de Castro and Simon Pearson) together with Wedding Present guitarist Simon Cleave for his new band.

Cinerama released a clutch of singles in support of their debut LP, as well as a number prior to 2000’s Steve Albini-recorded DISCO VOLANTE “dangerously, seductively sweet” [Melody Maker]. Notable were the heart-rending SUPERMAN (complete with alternative Spanish take) and the six and a half minute epic HEALTH AND EFFICIENCY (also available in French!).

The third Cinerama studio album, TORINO (released in 2002), was much darker than the first two, with Gedge returning to a more guitar driven sound and deciding to write predominantly about infidelity. “Cinerama are escaping the shadow of Gedge’s illustrious indie-legend past. Torino is a giant beast of adulterous lyrical fantasies, cult soundtrack flourishes and the screams of Albini-engineered guitars” [Uncut].

At the end of 2002, Gedge and Murrell unexpectedly split up, and he decided to leave Leeds, his home for the preceding twenty-four years, and move to Seattle, Washington. Following the end of this fourteen-year relationship, Gedge began writing a collection of songs apparently influenced by his despair over the split. TAKE FOUNTAIN, the resultant album, was recorded in Seattle by Steve Fisk [who also produced The Wedding Present’s WATUSI in 1994] and released, perhaps ironically, on St. Valentine’s Day 2005. This saw Gedge reviving The Wedding Present name for the first album since 1996’s SATURNALIA to a torrent of critical acclaim. TAKE FOUNTAIN “is as eloquent an emotional discourse as he has mustered.” [Mojo]. “Fans have long since recognised Gedge as more poet than pop star. Like Byron without the marsh fever, TAKE FOUNTAIN confirms his status as an extraordinary songwriter” [The Times].

In the wake of TAKE FOUNTAIN’s success, and after almost an eight-year hiatus, The Wedding Present set out on a mammoth twenty month concert tour of Europe and North America which included most of the major festivals and ended in November 2006. The following month Gedge relocated to Hollywood, California but ventured back across the Atlantic in October 2007 when The Wedding Present performed the GEORGE BEST album live as part of a George Best “Twentieth Anniversary” Tour of Europe.

In January 2008 the band assembled in Steve Albini’s Chicago studio to record EL REY, which was released in the summer of that year to further critical acclaim. The NME described the album as “a beauty... some of the funniest, cleverest and most relevant indie you’re likely to hear this year” while The Guardian newspaper agreed that “Gedge has consistently been way ahead of other, more lauded musicians”. At the end of 2008 Gedge fulfilled a long held ambition by releasing a bona fide Christmas song, HOLLY JOLLY HOLLYWOOD, a duet with Los Angeles based chanteuse, Simone White.

In April 2009 Gedge collaborated with the BBC Big Band for the biannual Fuse Festival which was held in Leeds. For the event he performed Wedding Present and Cinerama songs backed by eighteen world class musicians including legendary trumpeter Derek Watkins. In what proved to be a busy yet unusual year for Gedge he also made his debut as a radio DJ in Texas, released his bass player’s solo album on his own label and launched his own mini-festival, AT THE EDGE OF THE SEA, in Brighton.

WEDDING PRESENT DISCOGRAPHY

Singles / EPs

Go Out And Get 'Em Boy! (Reception 1985)
Once More (Reception 1986)
You Should Always Keep In Touch With Your Friends (Reception 1986)
My Favourite Dress (Reception 1987)
Anyone Can Make A Mistake (Reception 1987)
Nobody's Twisting Your Arm (Reception 1988)
Why Are You Being So Reasonable Now? (Reception 1988)
Kennedy (RCA 1989)
Brassneck (RCA 1990)
3 Songs EP (RCA 1990)
Dalliance (RCA 1991)
Lovenest (RCA 1991)
Blue Eyes (RCA 1992)
Go Go Dancer (RCA 1992)
Three (RCA 1992)
Silver Shorts (RCA 1992)
Come Play With Me (RCA 1992)
California (RCA 1992)
Flying Saucer (RCA 1992)
Boing! (RCA 1992)
Loveslave (RCA 1992)
Sticky (RCA 1992)
The Queen Of Outer Space (RCA 1992)
No Christmas (RCA 1992)
Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah (Island 1994)
It's A Gas (Island 1994)
Sucker (The Wedding Present 1995)
Mini EP (Cooking Vinyl 1995)
2, 3, Go (Cooking Vinyl 1996)
Montreal (Cooking Vinyl 1997)
Interstate 5 (Scopitones 2004)
I'm From Further North Than You (Scopitones 2005)
Ringway To Seatac (Scopitones 2005)
The Thing I Like Best About Him Is His Girlfriend (Vibrant 2008 - download only)
Holly Jolly Hollywood [with Simone White] (Vibrant 2008 - download only)

Studio Albums

George Best (Reception 1987, re-released by Cooking Vinyl 1997 w/ extra tracks)
Bizarro (RCA 1989, re-released by Camden Deluxe 2001 w/ extra tracks & sleeve notes by Mark Beaumont)
Seamonsters (RCA 1991, re-released by Camden Deluxe 2001 w/ extra tracks & sleeve notes by Simon Goddard)
Watusi (Island 1994)
Saturnalia (Cooking Vinyl 1996)
Take Fountain (Scopitones 2005)
El Rey (Vibrant 2008, re-released by Scopitones 2009)

Compilations

Tommy: Singles 1985-1987 (Reception 1988, re-released by Cooking Vinyl 1997)
Hit Parade 1 (RCA 1992, re-released as a double CD by Camden Deluxe 2003 along with Hit Parade 2 & a 12 page booklet with sleeve notes by Everett True)
Hit Parade 2 (RCA 1993, re-released by see above)
Singles 1995-1997 (Cooking Vinyl 1999)
Search For Paradise : Singles 2004-2005 (Scopitones 2006)
Yé Yé : The Best Of The RCA Years (Camden Deluxe 2007) - with sleeve notes by Steve Lamacq
How The West Was Won : Singles 2008 (Vibrant 2008)

BBC Radio Session Compilations

John Peel Sessions 1987-1990 (Strange Fruit 1993)

Evening Sessions 1986-1994 (Strange Fruit 1996)

John Peel Sessions 1992-1995 (Cooking Vinyl 1998)

Ukrainski Vistupi V Johna Peela: Ukrainian John Peel Sessions (RCA 1989, re-released by Fresh Ear 2000 w/ extra tracks)

The Complete Peel Sessions (Castle Music 2007) - with sleeve notes by Ken Garner

Live Albums

Live 1987 (Scopitones 2007)

Shepherd's Bush Welcomes The Wedding Present (Secret Records 2008) - live concert recorded in London in 2005

Videos & DVDs

*Punk (BMG Video 1990) - live concert filmed in Leeds in 1990 plus promo videos

Dick York's Wardrobe (BMG Video 1993, re-released by Cherry Red Films 2009) - 'hit parade' promo videos with a voice-over by Alan Freeman

An Evening With The Wedding Present (Secret Films 2008) - live concert filmed in London in 2005 with an interview with David Gedge