

## Interview with Matt Chaos – Guitarist in groups: Chaotic Firing Squad and The Outfit

### So, Chaotic Firing Squad - How did that come about?

It all started in a nightclub called **Soho** in Prahran **1987** and Ed Browne came up to me, the lead singer, green mohawk VARUKERS style and he said “Gday I’m Ed Browne, wanna start a punk band?” I go “yeah, why not I’m Matt.” I played Bass and Ed played guitar, so the next day we started **CHAOTIC FIRING SQUAD** and Ed got in a mate, Rohan, who was a singer... we didn’t have a drummer at that stage and we just jammed away at this haunted house in Caulfield and we wrote that song “Pooley underpants” as it was a hunk house and someone found like four pairs of pooley underpants in the bottom of a cupboard and no-one owned up to it but we reckon it was Ed, and he actually confessed a few years later that they actually were his.

We threw them in the next door neighbours pool and he came around with a rake with the undies dangling off it and said “Look, I tolerate your music, I tolerate your parties...but why do you have to put underpants in my pool ? especially ones that have been defecated on” and he just ended up going away and so we wrote our very first ever song after that. We ended up down at Prahran at the back of Chasers in this Rehearsal space that we shared for a bunch of years with SPIDERBAIT. And on one of Ed’s visits to Prahran he encountered ‘**Sargent Savage**’, a copper who was a real prick and a few friends had been chased and beat on by him and he hated punks with a passion, so we wrote the song “**Pran Pigs**”, about him.

### And what were your /bands influences then?

**THE OUTFIT** was pretty eclectic as, of course we all had our own influences, like Noah the Guitarist was inspired by Hendrix and 1960’s stuff, but loved punk as well, so put the two together. I was influenced more by UK 1980’s punk but also stuff like the VELVET UNDERGROUND and THE BIRTHDAY PARTY and even AC/DC and Ed was kind of into a lot of the same stuff but had a lot of JOY DIVISION influence as well and as all three of us could write music and songs we ended up churning out so many songs it’s not funny! So, yeah, we got all that together and had a few covers going on (CRASS / 4-SKINS) as I was into some of the good Oi! stuff as well like THE BUSINESS and SHAM 69. And say in like ’85 /’86 the skins that attended gigs tolerated the **Chaos Punks**, but if you were a punk in the wrong spot back then you may have got the shit kicked out of you.

By the late 1980’s and early 1990’s the Nazi element was a bit more prevalent, and they were like old **Oi! boys** you know. It became a much different scene. One of the connecting points was **Jason Bastard** and he and a few others kept a good eye on them regarding any punks that may have got some heat you know. He would take a lot of the young punks under his wing and make sure that they didn’t get into too much trouble you know... he was very good like that. He didn’t do drugs, didn’t drink a whole lot and taught a bunch of them boxing and pretty much worked at spreading good will across the scene. A lot of them lived Jason’s mantra to an extent and I think he saved a bunch of them from going off the rails. He was based in Preston and would teach a lot of the young punks boxing and how to stick up for themselves you know.

**Yeah, I mean I was chatting with Jason about how he dabbled in that whole Oi! scene to a degree but then got out of it and how he was a conduit of sorts between the two scenes...He had the respect from both parties...**

Yeah, definitely. Like when I first started going out around 15 and was into punk and I went to a different school the following year and a mate of mine there was a skinhead and we became good mates on the first day you know; we went down to the **Prince of Wales Hotel** and met his mates and they were like "Shave your head, shave your head" you know...and they were all working class Oi! Boys. Yeah, so one day I got the clippers out and shaved my head and turned up in the denim and the docs and got to know a few of them myself. And when you got to know some of the older ones, there was that degree of respect where you could say "no trouble tonight, spread the word, make it a neutral gig" so Jason had that influence for sure.

**CHAOTIC FIRING SQUAD** played their first gig at the **Tote Hotel** in Collingwood; we rocked up and played and fluffed our way through with a mate on the mixing desk and we blew up the speakers and got thrown out on our ears basically and got banned from the Tote, and then we ended up getting a gig at Fitzroy fire station and played a **Punk Benefit** gig there, and then we did our first gig proper, which was also BASTARD SQUAD's first gig and played down at the **Duke of Edinburgh Hotel** on St.Kilda Road in **1987**. In the punk scene, it's often made up of groups of friends and you tend to hang in your own group and sometimes mingle with others over time, and we sort of upheld the 1970's total chaos, shock value attitude of punk, in a non-hardcore more fun kind of way, I guess. Drug songs, stupid songs and lyrics...turning church songs into punk songs... And like with **CHAOTIC FIRING SQUAD** we got up on the roof of the ANZ bank on Chapel Street one day and played a gig and set the alarm off and the cops came after we'd got back into our rehearsal studio, we locked the door and they were banging on it but we all got let off as we were all only 17 you know... just random chaos events like that. We lined up a gig at Pentridge as the activities officer was an old Oi! boy and so we rocked up, but our drummer didn't arrive, so we didn't actually get to play, and the prisoners had to go back into lockdown for the afternoon, so it never happened. Me and Ed copped it though as we were walking through the activities area, all the inmates yelling shit out at us, thinking we were coming in from the Juvenile system or whatever.

So yeah, we found a new drummer after that. We set up a gig at the Toorak /South Yarra library for the kids as an activity and we pre-sold 200 tickets for this gig, but we'd given them a tape of other bands songs thinking we could scam it, but the guy rang us up and said "Are you really that band on the tape? Or are you that punk band we keep hearing about from Prahran?" We'd changed our name to THE OUTFIT by this stage, and he might have seen some graffiti about us or something so again it never went ahead. So, after the shelved prison gig we changed our name to **COLD BLOODED CHAOS** but that only lasted about 3 gigs and then we settled **on THE OUTFIT** and then we were playing everywhere, and Noah's dad, who was in advertising, got us a Xmas headline gig at the Espy for about 1000 people and that was a great night. So, we played quite a lot of shows, many low-level support to bands like **X** and some others and BASTARD SQUAD of course who were our brother band for quite a few years and then that band broke up. Noah left, Harry our Drummer left and Ringo our Rhythm guitarist left as well. Ed had moved to Vocals at this stage, so it was just back to us, the original members then we found another Guitarist (Tim) and got Matti Harrod in as the drummer, which was **THE OUTFIT # 2** and we started to get a shitload of gigs with bands like SPIDERBAIT, FIREBALLS, etc. We ended up getting on the Push Over line up and then the whole thing died so that was around **1992**, I think.

Ed was a great front man; there was a period there where he was decked out in make-up, one half white and all happy and the other dark and evil, in an old grandpa shirt backwards so it looked like a straitjacket, all tied up and with a Top hat and stuff like that, he really had a presence. We also played some great **All Ages** shows and had great reactions from the kids which was wild, they went psycho! Same with the Espy; they looked after us really well, lots of fond memories. 6 months later we started up **GLOBAL MANTRA** which was a totally different thing altogether.

**And what about the Punk Pub Crawls? Did you go to any of those?**

Yes for sure and helped organise one via the Arthouse Hotel, making it the first pub on the list, like it used to get handballed for someone to help with each year with flyers and maps and all that stuff and a lot of pubs had started closing down in the city and we got to know the Arthouse folk after doing a few gigs there and I said "look, you should open on a Saturday, even for one or two hours in the early afternoon and I'll make it the start pub for the crawl" and they were all for it and it kicked on from there as the first stop which was great.

And yes, I was at the '**Riot at the Hyatt**' and I was the first bloke to walk up to the bar as I was at the head of the Crawl and Ed was on crutches at that stage from kicking a window and they said "We're not going to serve you" and we were like "What for?" and he's like "We don't want you drinking here" and I turned around and said "They're not gonna fucking serve us" and word spread down the line real fast as there were around 3-400 people that year and people started to get antsy and you'd hear a table turn over and a tinkle of glass and ashtrays hitting the floor, then chairs over the bar and it was on for young and old and the place got trashed. The cops turned up and escorted everyone from pub to pub and that was it and there was a second '**Riot at the Hyatt**' where the cops were involved and it got a bit messy. And when Collingwood won the grand final in 1990 it got crazy with the cops blocking off streets, punks jumping all over cars, people yelling over megaphones and the whole bit. They were expecting thousands of people from the game to descend on the city, and they ended up herding us like sheep down to Flinders Street and telling us to piss off and get on the trains or we'll all be arrested.

**And what about divisions within the scene, what is your take on that?**

Well, there was always that thing where that dickhead from that group was fighting with that dickhead from this group and all that and the endless arguments and discussions about what is punk, what does it mean to you. All that stuff and like for me, I got into the MUSIC as the thing that drew me in, but I also loved the attitude and look too you know, who gives a fuck? Have fun with it you know. Was it the politics? Your left-wing views and your right-wing views? I used to have those discussions with the punks and the skins.

**I think punk is about all of it. It is the fashion, the music, the attitude, and of course people will say you can be a punk without dressing like one and all that...**

Yeah, and I used to touch on that in some of my lyrics, about how that crew didn't get on with that crew and all that. Some of the chaos punks used to be total psychos after being on the piss and sometimes there was fighting and hating and there were always shallow reasons why someone didn't like someone else, like just because of shit like, which bands a person had on their leather jacket and how their politics didn't mix with another's and all that, which is stupid. I knew a lot of people across a lot of different sub-genres you know like the **crust punks** were friends I hung out with all the time, a local crew from Prahran, and we did our gigs and you'd catch up with everyone and then later on the scene seemed to get smaller and not as full on as it once was.

But of course, there are dickheads everywhere and sometimes you'd have people come into the scene and feel like they had to prove themselves and they'd end up hurting others and isolating themselves. It didn't happen a lot, but it happened.

**And what about the bands like VICIOUS CIRCLE, DEPRESSION, PERMANENT DAMAGE, DEATH SENTENCE, etc. Did you see that there were those kinds of divisions within their specific audiences?**

Yeah like say with Smeer and Hardcore House; I still catch up with Smeer to this day, he's a top bloke and yeah, there was a different crew there at Hardcore House in Carnegie with parties all the time and shit like that and he did a hell of a lot for the scene and there will always be people who hang shit on the likes of him and Jason Bastard, that's just how it is. Smeer did a lot for the scene but he had a problem with the Skinheads, and he used to speak up and jump in and punch on with them, and he copped a few hidings as a result, and it got to a point where he was like "Fuck this shit, I'm never playing a punk gig again" and he kinda stepped away from it a bit until later on when he played other gigs with hardcore bands.

And yeah, the **DEATH SENTENCE** crew were different again and the **VICIOUS CIRCLE** guys had their own crowd and then you had **I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVY** and bands like that, so yeah, all different. It could also be people from the late 1970's UK punk era, there was the UK 1980's inspired crowds, the USA Thrash crews... all with their own thing and politics going on. I was there to get into the music, have fun, jump on some shoulders and slam dance, drink some beer, play pool and pick up some chicks and have fun! You wanna talk politics? Go home to your room and do that or organise a debating table and do that. Get over it...have some fun... that was my attitude to it all. And the scene could get very destructive very quickly, with a lot of people who died as a result of heroin and suicide... mid 1980's wave and early '90's wave. It must be like 100 people that I have known who have died and where do you hear that besides listening to some old coppers talking about their mates who died in the war... it's crazy. So many people on smack. It came in two waves, around 1984 and the early – mid 1990s. I'm very proud to say that I never used it. We always had people staying over, find 'em on the street, have punks coming down from interstate, we were like "Hey come and crash at our joint". We'd take magic mushrooms to nightclubs and hand them out to people, trip off our heads, just have a lot of fun.

**And what was your take on the late 1990's where the whole Punk scene kinda changed and you had the Skaters, the baseball caps, the three-quarter pants, white socks and all that.**

Yeah, I got to a point in my early 20s where I felt like I had to let my past go in a way as I felt it was very destructive and I had a lot going on, and felt like I might end up dying and I was going through a really destructive stage in my life and didn't really give a shit about pretty much anything, and I had an opportunity with work so I threw myself into that and stopped going out as much and GLOBAL MANTRA wasn't playing punk gigs, we were doing different stuff. There were people going crazy and dying around me and I thought it was time to make a change and there was a period there where I probably didn't go out for two years. I'd go to the occasional punk show in the late 1990's and there'd be like ten punks there, all young kids, nobody I knew, so it all changed and then a new cycle would emerge and on it goes...

**What about Squats? No doubt you stayed in a few in your time, yeah?**

Yeah, there were a few, one of the best ones was in Toorak actually, where there was this big mansion that would occasionally get news coverage. Other ones in Richmond, like the **Lennox Street Squat** that is still going to this day I believe. Heaps in Prahran where a lot of that crew used to live. A

lot of them were inhabited for very short terms, 2-3 months at best at times, with others being around longer.

Oh, and yeah, Ed will kill me if I don't tell you about **Matt the Russian**. One night in Caulfield we were rehearsing and we used to have this competition where you'd drink a slab and just being stupid we got this bottle of Amyl Nitrate and we were heading into the Thrash club in Bridge Rd and we were on the train, being stupid and the train lurched and it shot up my nose and I'm off my fucking head and I got kicked out of the club by trying to fuck some girl on the couch or something. I dunno, I can't remember it and so Ed calls me **The Russian** ever since!