

DAVE BALFE is the demonic genius who gave us **THE TEARDROP EXPLODES**, **ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN**, **VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE**, **ZODIAC MINDWARP** and **JESUS JONES**. Mad Manc yup or McLaren-style Svengali-Baba? **STEVEN WELLS** exposes the dark and secret source of his strange power. **TIM JARVIS** captures his foul image for posterity.

Satan slicks back a quiff oiled with baby seal fat. He wipes blood off his blue suede shoes with a cloth made from the skin of an A&R man who has recently been rewarded for his sins by being reincarnated as a higher life form, a slug.

Satan presses buttons on the infernal Rock'n'Roll telephone. It is time to check up on his earthly operatives, the mortals whose mission it is to inject pop-infected semen into the arteries of the common mind. Up on the surface of the planet, in the Rock 'n' Roll quarter of London, England, a phone is picked up. "Hello, Dave Balfe speaking. . ."

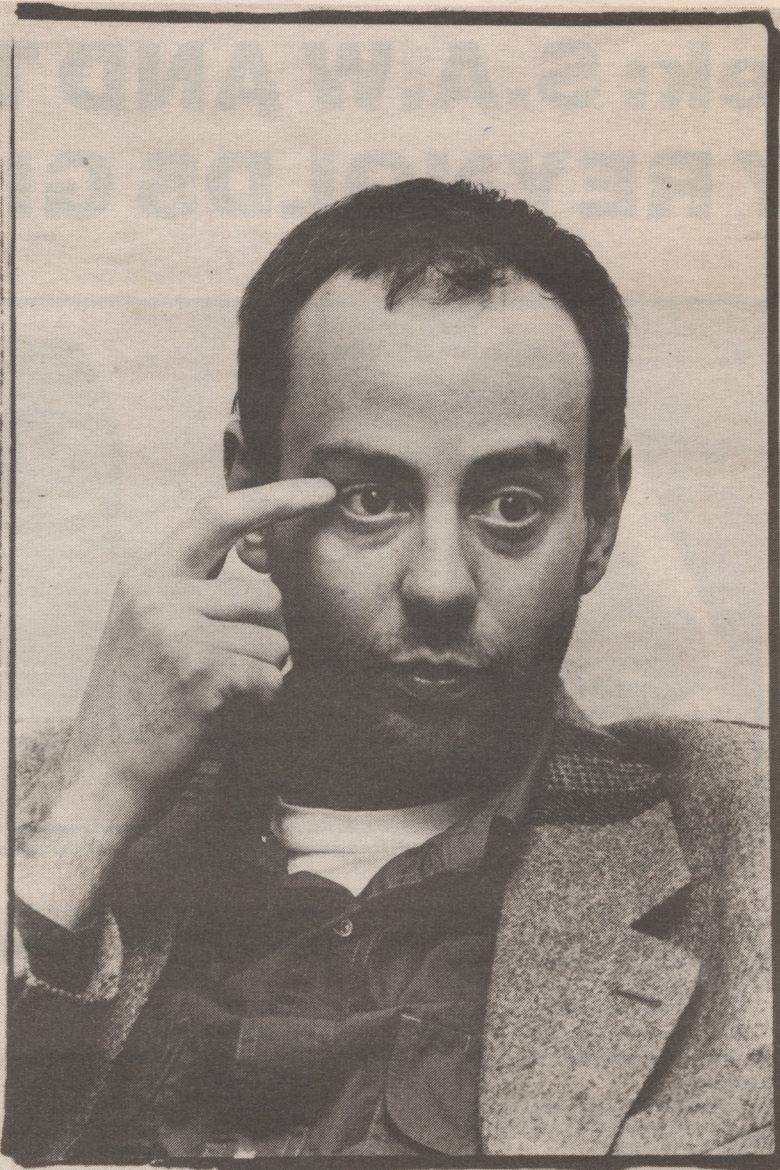
Dave Balfe Management it says on the door, right next to Food Records. It's a throbbing beehive of pop activity. Phones ring, computers bleep and the fax vomits. Press officer Andy Ross, a wideboy whose dress-sense owes much to the fat Lancastrian comedian from *Hi-de-hi*, begs us to sit down while he sees if his boss "is finished with his meeting yet". We've just come back from the pub, me, Andy and Tim Jarvis. We played the quiz machine. Andy was crap on all the questions about sport and science. Then the machine asked: "WHO IS YOUR LORD AND MASTER?"

a) Jesus Christ?
b) Mrs Thatcher?
c) Beelzebub?"
Andy's eyes rolled back to reveal horrible whites resembling salmonella-infected pickled eggs, blood poured from wounds in his hands, feet and from his side. He started to vomit frogs. We were thrown out of the pub. Andy goes into David Balfe's office to see if his 'boss' has "finished his very important call yet". "You can go in now," says Andy. There is spittle dribbling from the corner of his mouth.

Dave Balfe was once a Wolfie Smith type leftie-punk playing bass with Liverpool punk rockers Radio Blank who became the slightly better known Dalek I Love You. Standing in front of a Pete 'King of the Trainspotters' Frame family tree of 'The Liverpool Bands', Dave informs us that he is "no Paul Newman". We chuckle. He asks if he can look over the photos before they are published. We hoot.

At first Dave tries to convince us that he is Malcolm McLaren. "When I was 18 I stole a drum machine, no, make that a synthesiser, I stole a synthesiser in a smash and grab raid. . ." Which is absolute bollocks. Dave looks cunning but he also looks as if his crim activities were strictly limited to the usual naughty drugs as a youth and maybe a bit of present-day chart fixing. He is not a borstal boy Rock'n'Roll outlaw and I seriously doubt whether his daddy was a bankrobber. Look, I tell him, this 'Svengali' bit is old hat. Why don't you pretend to be the Devil?
"OK," says Dave.

The reason I'm really here is that ninety per cent of pop is, and always has been shit. Sometimes a band comes along that simply stuns. Two such bands are Voice Of The Beehive and Jesus Jones.



Balfe displays his eye for an act

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

VOB are two gangly post-Thatcher Valley-Dolls who front a pop band that take the definition of "classic pop" (the Beatles via The Monkees via The Buzzcocks) and successfully redefine it in a way that ALL the C86 band so miserable failed to do. Jesus Jones are quite simply the only "best band since The Beatles" to have emerged this year. 'Info Freako/Psycho' was the Beatles meets Duran Duran

Michael. He is a very, very nice young man. He is the epitome of the nice middle class white boy in a rebel rock band. "The thing that's very interesting about Mike," says Balfe is "he seems very rational, very prepared to listen to other people which isn't normal for a musician, most musicians are so

upon us the mewling acidic pop of The Teardrop Explodes and Echo And The Bunnyman. Oh yes, and the Naughty Lumps. Contact with the raging cosmos that is the inside of Drummond's head steered Dave away from his early flirtation with Leftie rhetoric and started him on the puzzling path to the Bhuddist/Yup-nihilist creed that he professes (at great length) today. That's all he wanted to

meglomaniatic. . . Is he evil? "He has a deep seated amorality which is not just the plain badness which a lot of people think it is. . ." Oh yeah, but he's not nasty is he? "Yes," says Dave. "He is."

So, is Balfe the mouth merely the capitalist exploiter of the fruits of true genius? What is his input? "Well, take 'Info Freako', it's brilliant! Even Bruno Brookes likes it. What's the secret? I wish I knew and I'd churn 'em out! "Some people have the good fortune to go in to the studio, do what comes naturally and it works for them. They are the lucky few . . . spontaniety and talent are important. But putting that talent in context — which is the job of the record company and the management — little things, a single photo even, can totally transform a band's image, just doing it right. . ."

What about the JAMS' manual, Dave, is that how it works? Dave decides to lie. "Genius! The most profound book by a British author since Shakespeare and it's all TRUE!" What's your motivation, Dave? "Well Food and DBM are two schemes I came up with to steal money from musicians. I set up Food because I got sick of merely being an advisor to musicians which is essentially the manager's role. The record company gives me real power over the acts. You can just say 'No' to their stupid ideas rather than pleading with them. Plus you make more money." Andy Ross sticks his head round the door.

"Give me a good mention," he snarls, pointing a gnarled finger at his boss, "or it's a kneecapping!" I tell the poor lad that he hasn't been mentioned once. "You bastard!" he screams at Balfe. The pop business. Where else do you call the boss "bastard" to his face to let him know you love him?

drummer started testing his bass drum. Mike leapt to his feet, balled his fists and screamed "F—ING SHUT UP!" Total silence. Everybody looked away in, I swear it, real fear. Micheal sat down and smiled, nicely.

Why are Voice Of The Beehive the best pop group in the world? David sinks his chin on to his chest, rolls his eyes at me and . . . pauses. With the evil petulance of a scabby-kneed hyperactive seven-year old refusing to eat his brussel sprouts he says. . .

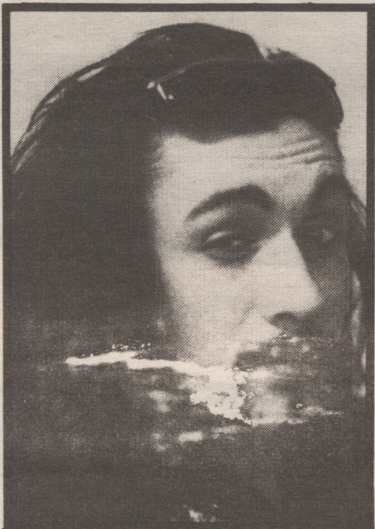
"Because they're mad." Pardon? Dave makes boggly eyes at me and nods demonically. "Rationality and art are mutually exclusive to some extent. Tracy doesn't seem to be bound by the strings of rationality. Not a loony as in she's daft or mad, she's very intelligent but at the end of the day she's just off in her own world. Of all the bands I've worked with they are the ones I have least control over. . ."

Originally Tracy wanted to call the band the Fashion Don'ts. Balfe barfed. Then she wanted to call the band Dear John. Not on my label you don't, said Dave. Then she came up with VOTB. "Which is brilliant! When I think of that band I think of dominant women. When I think of bees I think of a female dominated society. I mean those two women are just like bees, full of adrenalin, running around going bleeoooooooooooooork! Blit! Sloooooooooooooog! Pang! It makes you think of bees. Doesn't it?"

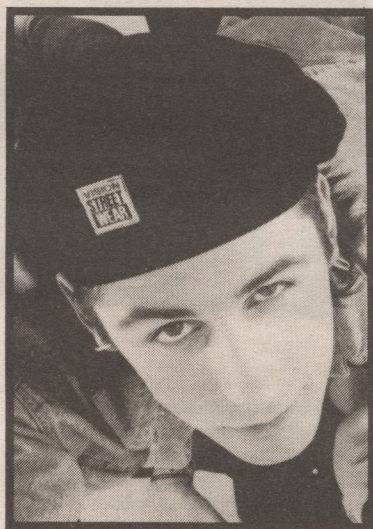
By consulting Pete Frame you discover that Dave left Dalek I Love You in December 1977 after deciding (two years too early) "that punk was dead". The trendy bastard.

He then joined the strange but brilliant Big In Japan (probably the only good band to come out of Liverpool since The Beatles) where he replaced a "flakey" Holly Johnson.

And then he teamed up with Bill Drummond and formed Zoo, a label which became a management company and a publishing house which inflicted



Left to right: Zodiac Mindwarp, Voice Of The Beehive, Jesus Jones



"Food Records and Dave Balfe Management are two schemes I came up with to steal money from musicians. . ."

defensive. It seems to me that what he's singing about and the noise he's making is very noisy, very aggressive. And it's contrasted with this sweet, nice guy who's basically a polite meglomaniatic. I know what Dave is saying. I sat chatting with young Mike/Jesus before a gig once. I was thinking — Cheez, worra wimpy middle class wanker! Then the

talk about really. "I'm an incredibly pretentious thinker. . ." Dave founded Food on the back of the band Brilliant (sticking out The Woodentops' first single on the way). Through Brilliant he met Zodiac Mindwarp and changed the course of Rock'n'Roll history . . . forever.