

## **The Speedies- Power Pop from NYC for Everyone**

### **How the Speedies Came Together**

It all started in Brooklyn in the mid 1970's. Eric Hoffert and Gregory Crewdson met each other for the first time at Brooklyn Friends School, working together to understand global patterns of climate for a homework assignment. At the time they were 11 years old. Around the same timeframe, Allen Hurkin-Torres and Eric Hoffert met each other while studying for their Bar Mitzvahs. Greg and Eric took their next steps by learning to play the guitar and visiting CBGBs at the age of 14 to see the Ramones. Allen picked up the drums quickly and was ready to take the stage. Their lives were now changed forever. One thing Eric, Greg, and Allen all had in common as young kids - a love of fast, pure, and catchy pop songs - but with an edge.

The popular music at the time was heavy metal and disco; but these young budding popsters had something completely different in mind. They called it power pop and they loved it with a passion. Fast forward to 1978 and Eric, Greg, and Allen just had to start the best power pop band imaginable. At the young age of just 16 years, they started practicing in the top floor of the brownstone building in Cobble Hill in Brooklyn where Allen lived with his parents and two sisters. No song could be longer than three minutes, songs had to be fast and catchy and they could only be about school, girls, and pop perfection.

In need of a singer, they went out for a walk around the block and met a fan of the Sex Pistols and David Bowie with a wild haircut - John Marino. John was invited upstairs for an audition and the magic of the band was instantly undeniable. With their first three minute pop song ready to play, the Speedies were born. Their first song was "You Need Pop". Big things were soon to come, but first a word on musical influences.

### **Musical Influences**

The Speedies trace their roots to a number of key inspirations - starting with Saturday morning TV cartoon theme songs, the Jetsons, the Flintstones, and the Banana Splits. From this pure pop culture starting point the band moved on to the pop music of the Monkees, the Who, and the Beatles. The Speedies then jumped into a love for the hard edged bands of the early 70's that created the best glitter rock that could be heard - David Bowie, Mott the Hoople, T-Rex, The New York Dolls, and the Sweet. Just prior to the birth of the Speedies, the band members were deeply inspired by fast and hard pop from the UK by the Buzzcocks, the Sex Pistols, the Jam, Generation-X, and the Undertones.

In fact it was this last wave of bands that convinced the Speedies that it was time for an International Power Pop Overthrow. But the Speedies were different than any of these bands - they crafted their own sound which combined the best of all of them with a vision that power pop could take over the world. Power pop wasn't just music; it was a way to look at the world. The Speedies were also celebrating pop culture - including a love for breakfast cereals like Cap'n Crunch and the cool prizes inside.

### **The Rapid Rise of the Speedies**

The Speedies' first show took place on a cold winter night - December 26, 1978 at Max's Kansas City. It may have been cold outside, but it sure was hot inside, where the Speedies sold out the show and had more people attend Max's on a Tuesday night than ever before.

The packed crowd went wild and the band had its first glowing and major review in Variety magazine. In addition to ragingly fast pop, the band had boxes of cereal all over the stage which they poured onto their fans when they played "We Wanna Be Your Breakfast Cereal". And the fans threw cereal back. With the band jumping up and down, people dancing and thrashing around, cereal in the air, and loud pop, it was a scene of beautiful but controlled chaos. NYC would never be the same.

Soon after the bands debut, five of the best Speedies songs were recorded in Toronto, Canada by Paul Hoffert – an award winning composer, producer, and musician with Top 100 pop hits of his own. After playing for awhile to an ever growing base of avid fans, the Speedies realized that in their haste to form the band they had neglected to include a bass player. So they brought in a fifth band member, John Carlucci, a talented and high energy bass player, who at the age of 22 was the elder statesman; John also introduced the band to the practice of wearing spiky toed Beatle Boots. To perfect the band experience everyone changed their name to suitably poppy pseudonyms including Eric Pop, Greg Zap, Allen Zane, Buckwheat, and the new member too – John Carl.

Before long, the Speedies were all of the rage in NYC with long lines around the block for their shows, riots with hundreds of Speedies fans, non-stop demand for more shows at clubs everywhere, and a move to put out the band's first single "Let Me Take Your Foto". The single was an instant hit and sold out of its first run almost immediately. Power pop songs like "Math Teacher", "Urban Mania", "Ready for the Countdown", "360 Sound", and "Fashion Free" became big hits for the Speedies with fans memorizing every word and singing along...

A big event at the time was the Speedies playing at the now historic Bottom Line in Greenwich Village which was also broadcast live on the radio; the Speedies were still so young that the club insisted that their parents supervise them for the evening and no cereal was permitted to be thrown into the audience. Indeed, some of the Speedies could often be seen doing their homework backstage just before the shows.

### **The Strategy: Power Pop Everywhere**

Before long, the Speedies were achieving remarkable feats for such a young band including the following:

- Voted Best Unsigned Band in America- 1979 NY Rocker and Soho News Readers Polls
- Toured the USA (Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Toronto, and many more) before 2/3 of the band were 18 years old
- Broke the house attendance records at Max's Kansas City
- Featured in the following publications: Life Magazine, New York Times, New York Magazine, Hit Parade, NY Post, NY Rocker, Boston Rocker, SoHo Weekly News etc
- Created one of the first rock videos which was played on MTV when MTV launched
- Played with many of the great bands of the time: The Jam, The Undertones, Gang Of Four, The Members, Revillos, Ultravox, The Tourists, and the David Johansen Group.
- Played all of NYC's best clubs including Max's Kansas City, Danceteria, Hurrah's, the Bottom Line, the Peppermint Lounge, the Palladium, the Ritz, etc.
- One of the only unsigned bands to ever play The Palladium in NYC
- Released two independent 45's, the second disc produced by Clem Burke of Blondie
- Received radio airplay on major NYC stations including WNEW

All of these milestones happened concurrently with math homework, social studies tests, and physics experiments. Indeed, the Speedies rock n roll life happened with Greg at Dewey High School in Brooklyn, Eric at the Bronx High School of Science, and Allen going to the High School for Music and Art in Manhattan.

### **Time to go to College**

The Speedies were wildly popular for three years until the band dissolved in 1981. After the release of the two Speedies singles, the tour across the country and the love affair from NYC fans, a critical decision was whether to go full speed ahead for the band and get a record deal or to go to school. Well, the Speedies did end up going to school, at least two of them at the time – Gregory Crewdson enrolled at Purchase and Eric Hoffert signed up at New York University and Cooper Union. Allen Hurkin-Torres also went the college route.

The Speedies did have a reunion concert at Danceteria about a year after the band had broken up and this was the last time that the band ever played together (Greg did not show up however). Unfortunately, the band never released an album and so most of its music and many of its best songs, were never heard by audiences outside of NYC and its brief touring stints. The Speedies project although successful in some ways was essentially unfinished, with the majority of its creative works experienced only by the power pop faithful during the bands brief lifecycle in NYC

### **The Quiet Years**

The band was pretty quiet for the better part of 24 years – from 1981 through 2005. During this time a compilation of New York bands called “The Great New York Singles Scene” featuring Television, Patti Smith, Richard Hell, and of course the Speedies was available for purchase at Amazon.com, Tower Records, and other fine retail and online stores, keeping the Speedies flame alive. Fortunately, the Toronto recordings were discovered by David Hoffert (Eric Pop’s cousin) having been kept safe and secure for more than two decades. The two Speedies singles, both of which had only limited editions when they were released in 1979 and 1981 respectively, started showing up on eBay at increasingly higher prices. More recently the Speedies were mentioned in the New York Times, in an Op-Ed piece on Joey Ramone, where a fan remembered the great days at Max’s Kansas City with the Speedies. The band was also mentioned in a novel by Jonathan Lethem called “Fortress of Solitude”.

### **Where are They Now?**

The Speedies have taken many different routes since the end of their brief but fun rock n’ roll career. Eric Hoffert studied Computer Science and Mechanical Engineering in NYC; he moved to San Francisco where he joined Apple Computer, and was one of the key inventors of Apple’s QuickTime multimedia standard, now on more than 500 million computers. More recently he returned to the NYC area, starting a digital media consulting company (customers and projects including Campbell Soup, Unilever, Stanford, and Carnegie Mellon Universities) and an on-demand document management and collaboration service (integrated with salesforce.com). Gregory Crewdson, living in Manhattan, is now a Professor at Yale University and a world famous photographer with works in museums around the world and a series of photography shows in London, NYC, and LA. Allen Hurkin-Torres, living two houses down from the birthplace of the Speedies, became a lawyer and was later elected to the New York State Supreme Court, where he is currently the second youngest Supreme Court judge in the State. John Carlucci works for Warner Bros. in LA and still plays

in bands (five bands to be precise). John Marino has retired from a long term career in the telecommunications industry working for Verizon in NYC. He has recently relocated to Las Vegas where he is practicing singing given the renewed interest in the Speedies.

### **The Speedies Quietly Resurface in Early 2005**

In April 2005, The Numero Group lovingly prepared and released a compilation album called "Yellow Pills: Prefill", a celebration of the power of power pop, with more than a dozen bands and two unreleased Speedies tracks. Numero was able to secure the rights to include two pure-play power pop tracks from the now famous Toronto sessions including "You Need Pop" and "1-2-3". The power pop underground is buzzing with glowing reviews of the CD and with a new excitement for the power pop music from the Speedies.

Dozens of positive reviews of the Speedies appeared on the Internet after Yellow Pills was released, and college radio airplay has been happening (including local stations WFMU (NJ), WNYU (NY), and WPRB/Princeton). Indeed on April 11, 2005 the B-side track "Time" by the Speedies (released in 1981) was highlighted as "Song of the Day" on an Internet music site. Even Entertainment Weekly (circulation 2 million), picked the Speedies song "You Need Pop" as one of the best tracks on the Yellow Pills compilation, reviewing the CD in its April 22 issue.

With bands like Green Day and the Killers having the most popular albums in the country and Green Day voted as best rock album with a Grammy, one has to wonder what this means for the Speedies. The Speedies invented music like Green Day and the Killers before kids today were even born. And music from the late 1970's is hotter than ever right now.

Indeed, the Speedies have been approached by multiple labels expressing an interest to put out an album with the released tracks and unreleased songs by the band. There has even been a request for a Japanese tour. And the band members recently uncovered a series of recorded and live tracks that are testimony to the power and potential of the Speedies.

### **The Speedies Explode onto the National Scene in 2005**

One could say that the original Speedies success in 1979-1981 and the interesting re-emergence in early 2005 would be enough to make any band happy. But an amazing event started to unfold in the spring of 2005. Twenty five years after writing their best song, The Speedies were approached by DeepMix, a music and licensing agency in Hollywood, California with a request to license the Speedies song "Let Me Take Your Photo" for a national advertising campaign for Digital Photography products from Hewlett Packard. The creative team from renowned advertising agency Goodby Silverstein that produced the HP campaign which was awarded "Best Advertising Campaign of the Year" by ADWEEK magazine developed a new spot called "RoadTrip" featuring the music of the Speedies. The HP advertisement is for the HP PhotoSmart line of cameras and printers. The spot featuring the Speedies is to run on a variety of network and cable networks including ABC, MTV, Bravo, Arts and Entertainment Network (as well the US Open event).

To support the nationwide advertising campaign and to allow new listeners the joy of owning the Speedies music, the band is releasing its first ever album called "You Need Pop!" in digital form on Apple iTunes in a special exclusive. The band also completed a digital EP called "Let Me Take Your Photo" which will be especially available on Apple iTunes service in conjunction with the release of the HP commercial; the EP includes a new dance mix of "Let Me Take Your Photo". At a later date, the Speedies music will be made available at

additional leading digital download services on a worldwide basis. In conjunction with a worldwide digital release of its first ever album and EP, the Speedies are also distributing two of their music videos: (1) "Let Me Take Your Photo" and (2) "Time" using digital video distribution platforms. The recent turn of events has taken the Speedies by surprise but they look forward to delivering their special brand of power pop to an entirely new and much larger audience...