

TO HERE KNOWS WHEN - GREAT IRISH ALBUMS REVISITED

All the God's Men & Explicit Material by Blue in Heaven



Blue in Heaven were from Churchtown in Dublin and released two of the greatest Irish albums of the 80s. The band were signed by Chris Blackwell to his label Island Records and their first album *All the God's Men* (1985), was recorded with legendary Factory Records' producer Martin Hannett at Strawberry Studios in Stockport.

The album's beautiful sleeve - a photograph of the band members surrounded by representatives from all of the world's religions - belies the dark, brooding sounds within. The recording process, though difficult at times due to Hannett's alcohol and drug issues, ultimately produced a record that sounds incredible. Island promoted it hard with the tagline: "A new force from Dublin joins hands with Manchester's seminal gothic producer."

Explicit Material (1986) was made in the Bahamas at Blackwell's Compass Point Studios with "The Islander" himself in the producer's chair. If the debut owes a debt to the "raincoat" sounds of Joy Division, Echo & the Bunnymen and The Sound, then its follow-up has a rawer, more stripped down rock sound straight out of Iggy's playbook.



The New York Times summed it up perfectly: "Blue in Heaven originally seemed to be yet another brooding, post-Joy Division quartet, but on the new

Explicit Material, the quartet, fronted by the singer-guitarist Shane O'Neill, has gone for a harder, more intense, and very "live" sound." That "live" sound was described best by Mark Prendergast in his book *Irish Rock*, when he wrote that the single 'I Just Wanna' was, "so full of energy, searing guitars, hammering drums, and sneering vocals that one felt on hearing it that the rock idiom had only just been invented."

When I announced that **Shane O'Neill** would join me on the podcast my feed was filled with huge affection for the band. "I remember being in a gaming arcade in Kinsale back in the 80s," my friend Emmet Greene wrote. "Blue in Heaven walked in looking like the last gang in town. It was like a scene from *The Lost Boys*." What a fantastic image.

"It was probably working with Hannett," says Shane reflecting on his fondest memory of Blue in Heaven. "He'd stand up and stop the tape and there'd be a mess of echoes and reverb. He'd turn and say, 'that's how you know it's mixed - if the echoes are interesting.' That little nugget is telling of how he operated."

Shane is still making great music. He has just released the brilliant *Age of Finding Stars*, his second album with his old friend David Long, the former Into Paradise frontman. The title track is one of the finest tunes of 2022, some of the Hannett magic most definitely rubbed off on him.



Shane O'Neill revisits *All the God's Men* & *Explicit Material* on *To Here Knows When - Great Irish Albums Revisited*, available on all podcast platforms. Episode notes and further info: www.paulmcdermott.ie/podcast