

TO HERE KNOWS WHEN - GREAT IRISH ALBUMS REVISITED

Horsedrawn Wishes by Rollerskate Skinny

In chapter 10 of *Cather* in the Rye Holden Caulfield, Salinger's narrator, describes his younger sister Pheobe as follows: "She's quite skinny, like me, but nice skinny. Roller-skate skinny." There it was - a beautiful name for a beautiful band.

In 1993 the NME awarded Trophy, the band's second EP, 'Single of the Week', writing: "If this is a fair indication of where Rollerskate Skinny are headed, then we'll be looking at a fit and strapping companion for Mercury Rev and The Boo Radleys in the weirdbeard greatness stakes. Prizeworthy stuff indeed."

Shoulder Voices came next, a fantastic debut album recorded with Laika's Guy Fixsen. The CMJ - New Music Report, put the band on their cover alongside Pavement and Low and wrote of the album: "Not since My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless* has dissonance been so effectively crafted into a pastiche of melodic euphoria." In the summer of 1994 the band joined Perry Farrell's Lollapalooza travelling festival. They survived the gruelling 42 date tour across the US and Canada and returned to Dublin to record with recording engineer Aidan Foley. The resulting album was ambitious in scale - there were more twists and turns on some individual songs than other bands had on entire albums. So ambitious in fact that a load of engineers turned down the job of mixing the recordings. Anjali Dutt successfully took on the challenge.

Horsedrawn Wishes came out in February 1996, and was rightly lauded. Raygun, the influential US magazine wrote: "Imagine the lush sonorities of Brian Wilson as inspiration for experimental composer John Cage with Sonic

Youth as his nervous back-up band and you've got a pretty good clue to Rollerskate Skinny." It doesn't get better than that.

The band demoed a third album but it wasn't to be, they broke up and went their separate ways. We'd follow the various member's fortunes through different bands: Ger Griffin and Steve Murray formed Walker (their long-lost album is soon to be finally released) before Steve went on to form Empire and then The Radio. Ken Griffin moved to New York and first formed Kid Silver and then Favourite Sons and more recently he's released three albums with August Wells. He's soon to put out new music with Emperor of Icecream guitarist Graham Finn as High Leaves.

Rollerskate Skinny left us with two magnificent albums. They also gifted us 'Speed to My Side', one of the greatest Irish singles ever. "I dropped the microphone, it hit the desk and it made this weird feedback loop and I said to Aidan can you just loop that for seven minutes and we'll take it to the rehearsal studio," recalls Ken. "We wrote 'Speed to My Side' then over that loop. So that song wouldn't have happened, if I hadn't been butterfingers." We should all be thankful for Ken's split-second of clumsiness.



“**THEY ALSO GIFTED US 'SPEED TO MY SIDE', ONE OF THE GREATEST IRISH SINGLES EVER**”



Ken Griffin revisits *Horsedrawn Wishes* on *To Here Knows When - Great Irish Albums Revisited*, available on all podcast platforms. Episode notes and further information: www.paulmcdermott.ie/podcast

