



peteholidai77@eircom.net
087 268 2984

Pete Holidai The Devil's Guitar
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Radiator from Space delivers exotic cinematic space age pop.

Pete Holidai has consistently explored the margins of pop music. From his pivotal role in Ireland's punk movement to his guidance of other Irish mavericks he has preferred the shadowy paths to the well travelled highways.

Pete Holidai has always roared down the path least travelled. Determination and innovation have earmarked the career of the legendary punk guitarist who launched his career with Dublin's Radiators From Space. The band challenged conservative Ireland during the seventies, opening the door for other mavericks rejecting the status quo. They were the first band in Ireland to declare their kinship with the 'new wave' bursting from London and New York in 1976-77. Their pioneering spirit saw them nurture acts like The Undertones and Stiff Little Fingers who supported them in their early careers.

"They were Ireland's first punk band" according to Bono, one of the musicians influenced by the band. Their sound encouraged him to perform: "not only can we play it but this is the kind of shit I like". When future Pogue Phil Chevron threatened to 'smash my Telecaster through the television screen' the instrument was wielded by Pete Holidai.

Holidai recalls the sheer bewilderment of some Irish audiences to their high octane guitar-charged rebel rock. At one early gig in the West of Ireland the band were confronted with a non-responsive audience. After the show young attendees approached them saying they liked the music but "didn't know how to dance to it." In a country where conservative showbands held a near monopoly on youth entertainment original acts like The Radiators were a rare species.

They were equal parts Gene Vincent and Johnny Rotten; as much James Joyce as Joe Strummer. Holidai's dexterity gave the Radiators a guitar attack that was new to Ireland. Commercial success often eludes the path finders, so it was with The Radiators, but not before they presented the acclaimed 'Ghostown' album produced by Tony Visconti (David Bowie, Morrissey, Iggy Pop, Manic Street Preachers). It is an album still acknowledged by many including *HotPress* magazine as one of the best Irish albums of all time.

Their work from the 'Ghostown' era retains an icy poignancy today. The songs are filled with shadows, secrets, contenders, strangers, ghosts and lonely rebel souls. The characters were witnessing the "monochrome snapshot" yet desiring the "Kodachrome dream".

Their desire for freedom proved too much for the punk audience which had become less adventurous. The Radiators left a lot of unfinished business. Some of this was revisited by the critically acclaimed (2006) 'Trouble Pilgrim' album.

Holidai continued mentoring and guiding the careers of young Irish musicians when the Radiators faded from view. He honed his production, management and playing skills with Light A Big Fire and Engine Alley and many others. This was publicly acknowledged with the Smithwicks/HotPress Producer award 1991. Yet a personal project was fermenting at the back of his mind.

Holidai researched extensively the esoteric 1950s lounge and exotica albums by leaders like Martin Denny, Les Baxter and Enoch Light All Stars. He decided to bring his rebel rocker persona to this lush orchestrated groovy sound. The result is 2011's *The Devil's Guitar*. It is an album imprinted with lost and lonely souls. The "secret thinkers" from his early work are alive in the back-streets of European bohemia.

Holidai's take on exotica hints at a shadowy narrative. In *The Devil's Guitar* a character called Johnny stalks the back-streets of bohemian European cities. The equally mysterious Lunar Girl's destiny seems entwined with the rebel hero. The mood is captured by Holidai's guitar and exotic percussion. At times the sound pulses like Peter Gunn lost in a Mediterranean dream.

When The Radiators sang: "it's the story of the movie: but they never made the movie" it seemed like an adventurous generation had been forgotten. With *The Devil's Guitar* that unmade movie may at least have the soundtrack it deserves.

Micheal Murphy June 2011