



# CURRY ON UP THE GONADS



## Stan Ogden gets the low-down on the Gonads movie & the US

### tour it's based on

THE story of those lovable South London rogues the Gonads is set to be immortalised on film later this year. Naturally it's a piss take.

The film centres on the band's 1998 US come-back tour, which included chaotic dates on the East and West Coasts. Although mythologized by them as "seven days of glory" the tour was in fact chaotic, badly organised and included en- counters with hookers, Irish Republicans, neo-Nazis, Mexican gangsters, toothless groupies, erotic dancers, over-zealous se- curity men and at least one chalked body outline.

Hollywood based producer-director Sandie West sees the project as "a punk rock Spinal Tap".

But the reality was just as funny as Curry On Up The Gonads sounds. For starters five Gonads went but only four came back! The drummer, a young Mod known as The Romulan because of his haircut, disappeared after the last night and was never seen again...

Davy Wood, a US promoter who modelled himself on the British TV spiv Arthur Daley from Minder, was the brains be- hind the tour. Wood contacted the band and persuaded them to let him promote the series of dates "to break America". They would be supported on the seven night tour by another UK punk band called The Filth FC.

### Now read on:

Rhythm guitarist and producer Clyde Ward says: "We landed at JFK and had a gig that night at the Pipeline in Newark, New Jersey.



*The Gonads live at CBGBs*

“Davy came with Mark Rainey, later the boss of TKO records in LA, to pick us up at the airport with Big Tony who doubled as our driver and our security man.



“Our first stop was this dodgy motel. The guy on the desk was astounded that we actually wanted rooms for the night. The motel was usually booked by the hour by prostitutes – there were a couple hanging about – or by people having affairs.”

Gal Gonad: “A quick in and out! The rooms were appalling with filthy carpets and sheets – rock’n’roll glamour, eh kids?”

Clyde: “It backed on to a railway track and at night every hour on the hour you’d hear these massive trains thunder past. They were so long they took about ten minutes to go by.

“We were told not to leave the motel on foot, but Gal went looking for a bar. He came back pretty quickly after finding a chalk body outline on the pavement. Our expectations of the tour went rapidly downhill.

“We were due on stage at 11pm that night but we didn’t actually get to gig until about 1am – so 6am in our heads.”

Clyde continues: “The next night the gig was in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a place called the Elvis Room. By the time of the gig, the whole town was covered in about four foot of snow so the only people in the audience had got there by foot.

“The support band were The Bruisers whose singer was Al Barr, now with the Dropkick Murphys. Al went out and made a passionate speech telling them that Gal was ‘the godfather of Oi’ and saying ‘There would be no Oi without Garry Bushell’ which was quite moving.

“Or it would have been! Gal’s missus was in the audience and she heard some kid say, ‘Oh my god, Garry Bushell’s old and he has a beard!’

“In fairness Gal was only 43 at the time. If they want old they should see him now!”

Gal takes up the story. “We heard the Murphys for the first time on that trip, their Do Or Die album was out that week and we played it non-stop in the van. Their ‘Barroom Hero’ became the anthem for the tour.

“The following night’s gig was at the Kirkland Café in Boston. This was a bigger show with a lot more people. And we did go down well, right up until the end when Clyde waved goodbye and three blokes at the back of the crowd sieg-heiled in return! No thanks!

“That evening Clyde and our bassist Casanova Kev went to find a bar and the bloke on the door called them ‘fuckin’ Brits’. Clyde chinned him, knocked him sparko. They wanted to go in and get a round in but Tony and Mark pointed out that they were slightly outnumbered...

“In the next Irish bar, Kev told the landlord they were from County Cork and just off the plane. They got free beers all night.”

Clyde: “The next gig was at the Tune Inn in New Haven, Connecticut. It had a very high stage which Gal tried to jump up on and missed. He almost broke his leg! Very painful...

“I wish I’d videoed it. I’d have got £250 from Jeremy Beadle.”

Gal: “You’ve Been Maimed!”

Clyde: “We went okay but at the end these immaculately dressed skinheads turned up and they were furious that they’d missed us. They had Davy up against the wall. We had to intervene to save him, so that night we played Terry McCann to Davy’s Arthur Daley.”

Gal: “Someone challenged us to a drinking contest. They were in a local band, maybe called Showcase Showdown. They said ‘You are billed as London’s leading lager louts on the poster. Let’s see how you do against us.’ We won,



of course. Then the hard stuff came out...”

Clyde: “The trouble was that session went on half the night accompanied by Gal’s repertoire of obscure Cockney songs like ‘A Mother’s Lament’. There were terrible consequences...because Gal lost his voice for the next gig which was at CBGBs in New York.”

Gal: “It was a huge improvement! Luckily the crowd knew the words to ‘I Lost My Love To A UK Sub’ and ‘Tuckers’ so I croaked out the verses and got them singing the choruses.”

Clyde: “Good gig but there was some fanzine writer who came backstage stage and insisted on asking Gal about the IRA. She was pro them. She kept banging on about ‘The Troubles’. Gal wound her up by telling her the Scots Irish had been in Ireland longer than the Yanks had been in North America.”

Gal: “She seemed to know very little about the Scots Irish influence in shaping the USA.”

“A few choice news clips were added and soon we realised we had put together a good old fashioned concept album.

“The sleeve was designed by a top artist in Chris Burke who also lives in our town. It is without doubt our finest work, not necessarily our best songs but a package that will remain current for a very long time and on the strength of it, we have seen an resurgence of interest and more gigs planned for 2017...”

“Until Lady Luck decides to mug us again!”

**Insane Society are:**  
**Steve Dangerous – Drums**  
**CJ Vomit – Bass/Vocals**  
**Wag – Guitar/Vocals**



Clyde: “There were a few black skins and punks at that gig and more women, including a couple of exotic dancers. Dave our lead guitarist ended up spending the night with both of them...and the snake.”

Gal: “Nice asp...”

Clyde: “But what about the snake?”

Bad snake jokes ringing around their ears, the gang then flew to San Francisco for a gig at the Cocodrie Club.

Clyde: “That was the best night of the tour. The place was rammo.”

Gal: “They knew the words better than I did! Mark Rainey jumped up and sang the original version of ‘Getting Pissed’ which wasn’t even in the set. I don’t think I’d even heard it for fifteen years.”

Clyde: “There were a few Chinese American skinheads that night too who were really up for it. In a way it’s a shame that wasn’t the last show because it was such a high. Instead...” Gal: “Instead Davy had us in LA for the last night, and for some insane reason we drove there and drove back over night! It was the Clipper Club, the heaviest night of the tour. When we got there the security guy on the door said, ‘Have you got any weapons?... Do you want some?’!

“He also told us “If you hear a gunshot tonight just drop to the floor”). It was the fastest gig we ever played!”

Clyde: “That’s true. He asked us about weapons because there were a lot of drive-by shooting in that part of town. It was on the edge of a heavy Mexican area. The McDonalds over the road had metal grills up for protection. There were bullet holes everywhere.

“Hours before the gig Kev had wandered off into the Mexican streets. Our driver Tony said ‘You’ll never see him again’. But Kev turned up about half an hour before the show with a gang of heavy Mexican guys who were his new best friends – he’d swapped jackets with the leader who had gold teeth. They seemed like good blokes.

“Backstage that night we were approached by this old skin-head who insisted on showing us his tattoo. He dropped his trousers and he had Hitler on his right thigh, but, he said ‘when I get aroused, Adolf salutes...’”

Gal: “It was one of those things you wish you could un-re-member.”

Clyde: “That night freaked out The Romulan so badly that he never came home. We never ever saw him again.”

Gal: “It was a good crack though, which is all the Gonads are about. We have no airs and graces, no pretensions. We’re just having a laugh and having a say...as we said back in the day.”

### **The key personnel on the US tour**

#### **The band:**

Garry Bushell, AKA Gal Gonad (vocals) Clyde Ward (rhythm guitar)

Casanova Kev (bass guitar) Rockin’ Dave (lead guitar)

The Romulan (drums & runners)

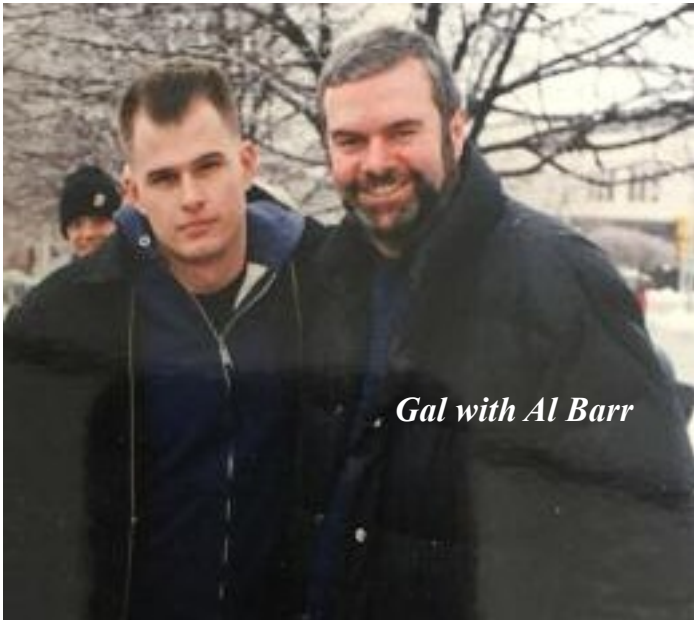
#### **Plus:**

Leah McCaffrey: UK new country singer, aka Mrs Gonad

Davy Wood: slippery US promoter

Mark Rainey: Sid Vicious lookalike punk

Tony Morda: burly bald US security man



*Gal with Al Barr*