



THE REFORMATION TOUR

SPANDAU BALLET



It started on a Saturday morning on the Holloway Road, North London, November '79: four schoolmates and one baby brother hoping to make good on a promise.

Halligan's rehearsal studio wasn't the most glamorous of surroundings. The PA wasn't quite loud enough and your feet stuck to the carpet. But with a fistful of songs, some outlandish threads and a 200 quid synthesiser bought on HP, the five pals successfully negotiated the first step and won the approval of the movers and shakers of the new London club scene, based around a Tuesday club-night in a Covent Garden bar called The Blitz.

"We could all feel there was a lot riding on it," says Martin Kemp. "Even though it was basically us dressed up, playing to a bunch of guys sitting on a sofa."

All they needed now was a name. From their Sixth Form germination in the music room at Dame Alice Owen's grammar school, through to this, their Year Zero, the boys had been through a few. The Roots, The Cut, The Makers and The Gentry were all tried on for size and found wanting. They needed something different, something contemporary, something that set them apart from the crowd.

"Spandau Ballet," suggested fellow Blitz Kid, Robert Elms.

"Preposterous but edgy; arty but aggressive; obscure but assured," says Gary Kemp. "It sounded perfect."

It was a name that threw down the gauntlet. With a name such as that, a band would be forced to play exclusive shows in arty cinemas, disused churches, St Tropez nightclubs, botanical gardens and probably a London warship. So they did.

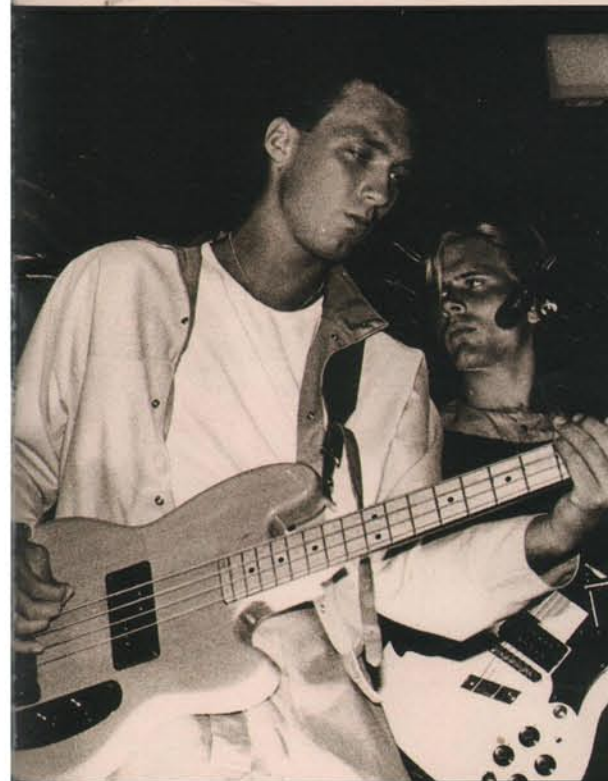
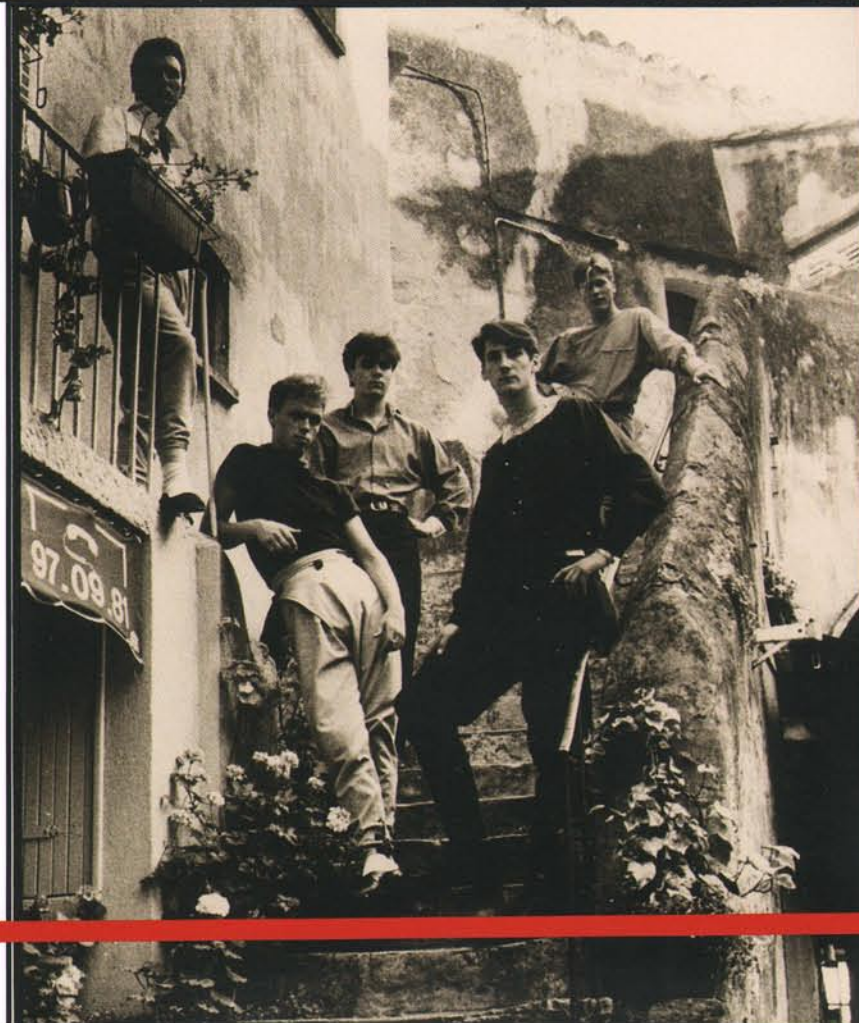




photo: Graham Smith

Spandau Ballet stepped sharply into the Eighties setting themselves as standard bearers for a bright new entrepreneurial spirit that flew in the face of ravaged Britain and embraced music and fashion in equal measure. With original songs that reflected Blitz Kid DJ Rusty Egan's own electronic play-list, Spandau became the musical applause for their young post-punk audience of designers, artists, DJs and assorted posers all of whom had been waiting for their very own pop culture moment.

Spandau and the Blitz Kids were an irresistible force. Before they knew it the five lads from North London were following in the footsteps of their own pop idols - David Bowie, Marc Bolan, Roxy Music and The Faces - as they ascended to the holy grail that was BBC1's *Top of the Pops*.

"The best thing was having your picture done for the '*Top of the Pops*' chart countdown," says Steve Norman. "They used to show a picture of the band with your chart position so you had to go in this little photographic studio they had set up and have your picture taken. Suddenly you felt you were becoming part of pop history."

As they finally put into practice those moves so studiously rehearsed with hairbrushes and tennis racquets in their bedroom mirrors, Tony, Gary, Martin, Steve and John delivered 'TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT' into the laps of nine million viewers - just one year on from Halligan's - dressed in sashes, kilts, tartan, Edwardian military and Willie Brown shirts. The single went to no. 5 and sold half a million. They'd arrived.

In early Eighties London clubland though, arriving was only half the game. Styles changed at lightning speed. A look was famously pronounced to last only a day, so Spandau ran with it. Within the space of six months they raced from stiff-collared electro-pop through bandanas, furs and Eastern European folk music ('MUSCLEBOUND') to '40s zoot suits and sweaty brass-drenched funk.



photo: Neil Matthews

'CHANT NO.1' provided the frenetic dance floor counterpoint to The Specials' mournful inner city requiem 'Ghost Town' through the summer riots of '81. As the representation of a raucous new London soul boy scene, encapsulated in steamy Friday nights in Soho's latest club du jour Le Beat Route, it was the band's second perfect pop moment.



photo: Graham Smith



"We were excited that it was something new again," says John Keeble. "We could have done more electro but by then we were all listening to funk. We thought it was going to be our first number one. I remember going into the record company when we were told the midweek chart position, sliding down the banisters and cracking open the champagne but it was all a bit premature. We got beaten by Shakin' Steven's 'Green Door!'"

They wouldn't have to wait too long. As the Eighties' economic boom kicked in, pop prospered. A British invasion of America, not seen since The Beatles and The Stones in the Sixties, swamped the US Billboard chart with a record 35% of the album and singles charts made up of UK acts. For Spandau it signalled the time to bid a fond farewell to the club scene and move on to a bigger stage.

The first hint of what was in store for them came during the *Diamond* tour at the Liverpool Empire in '82 when a teen scream powerful enough to loosen fillings almost took the lid off the theatre for the entire 70 minute set, from start to finish.

"That night was the first time the screaming was louder than the band," remembers Martin Kemp. "It was one of those things that you'd heard about with The Beatles."

Spandaumania was upon them. All that was needed now was the right record to usher the gathering teen army in.

'TRUE' changed everything. When first recorded out at Nassau's legendary Compass Point studios this six and a half minute ode to Marvin Gaye and unrequited love had seemed more a classy album closer than a career-defining single. But when producer Tony Swain moved its blissed-out backing vocals and that instantly recognisable guitar riff to the beginning of the song something happened.



photos: Eric Watson, Steve Rappoport, Andy Earl, Brian Aris



"I'm very grateful to Tony Swain for restructuring 'TRUE'," says Gary Kemp.

"You've got to have a good introduction and 'TRUE' never had a good introduction. Tony's arrangement was brilliant."

From the moment the record company heard it back in London they had no doubts. The album, originally intended to be called 'Pleasure' was swiftly changed to 'TRUE' and wherever you went in Chrysalis Records you could hear it playing. They knew exactly what they had on their hands.

When the phone rang early on a Tuesday morning in Gary and John's hotel room in Sheffield there were no false alarms this time. 'TRUE' was number one.



They'd knocked their idol David Bowie's 'Let's Dance' off the top spot. The riding up and down hotel corridors on trolleys, brandishing champagne bottles, could begin.

1983's *'Spandau Over Britain'* tour was everything the band had secretly dreamt of. Culminating in sell-out shows at three of the capital's most prestigious venues – the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall and Sadler's Wells theatre – the band ran the gauntlet in time honoured *A Hard Day's Night* fashion. Their trusty escape vehicle lost its wing mirrors and aerials and its side panels took a fearful battering as the fans tried to pluck the objects of their teen desires from within.

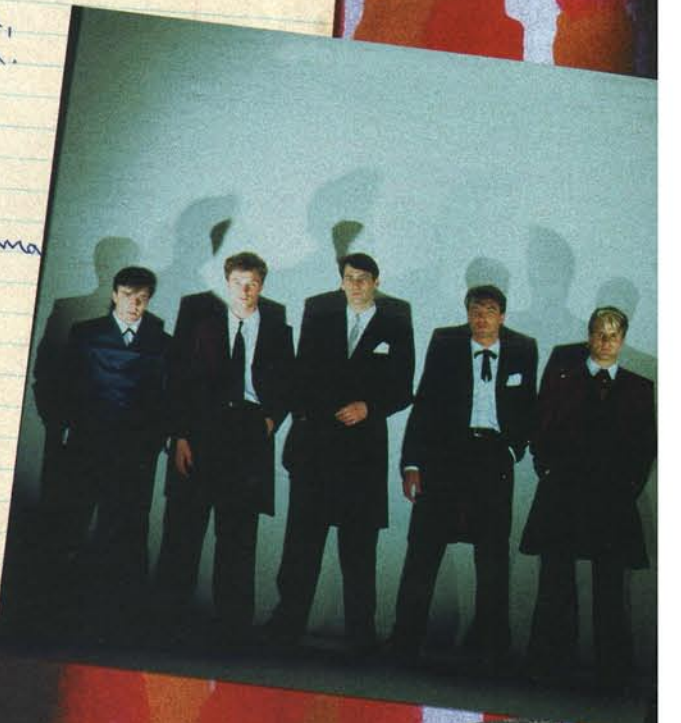
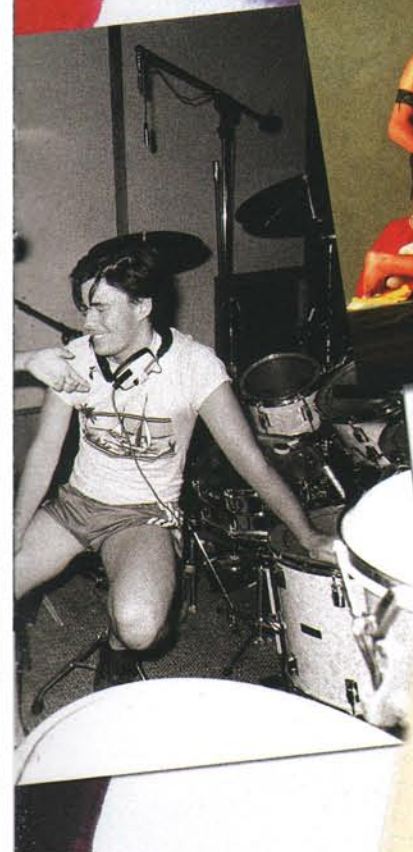
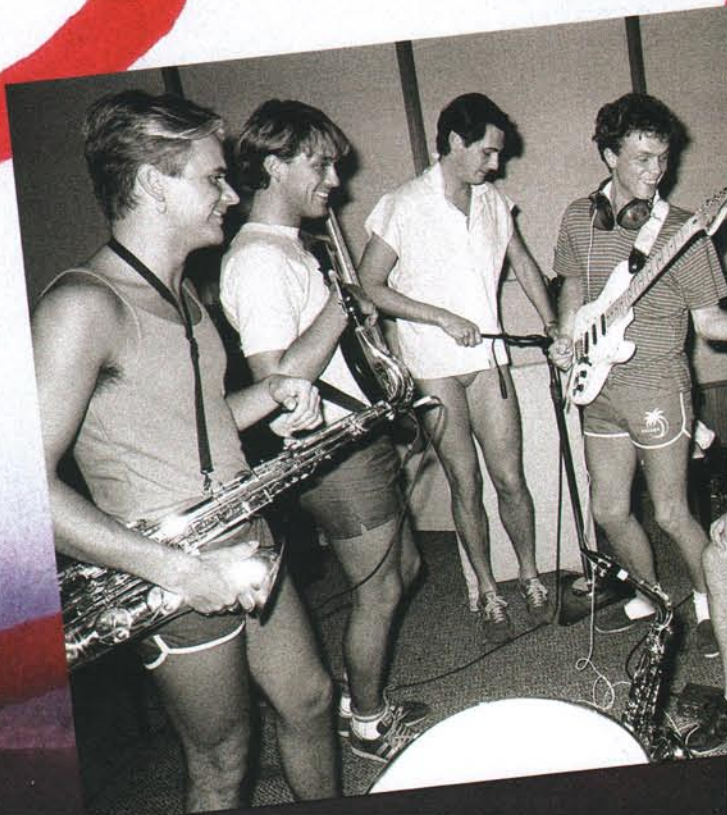
"There are girls that want to scream and rip your arms off," said Tony cheerily in the aftermath. "It's not their fault. They just want a part of you. Kids send us loads of cuddly toys as well."

"The whole back of the coach is full of cuddly toys. I said on *TVAM* that I do like a nice cup of tea and a chocolate chip cookie. Ever since then we've had chocolate chip cookies being thrown on stage. A big parcel arrived, beautifully wrapped with a big bow, and it was full of them. These girls had got all their pocket money together and bought about 30 packets."

There was plenty more to come. The anthemic 'GOLD' rubber stamped their teen status that long hot summer, at the same time further broadening their appeal as it became the go-to accompaniment for every triumphant televised sporting moment since.

The international success of the 'TRUE' album gave the band their much vaunted ticket to the world. The year ended in ten days of duplicated hysteria across the pond in LA, whipped up by the country's most influential new radio station, K-ROQ.

photos: Douven Spooner, group shot with flag - Eric Watson, Martyn Goddard



GOLD.

Thank you for coming home
I'm sorry that the chairs are all worn
I left them here, I could have sworn,
These are my salad days
Steady being eaten away
Just another Play For Today
Oh, but I'm proud of you,
Oh, I'm proud of you,
There's nothing left to make me feel small,
But luck has left you standing so tall.

Gold, always believe in your soul
You've got the power to know
You're indestructible
Always believe in
Cos you you are
Gold, glad that you're bound to return
You're something I should have learned
You're indestructible
I'll always believe in...

No, luck was not involved
Precious metal thought of the plan,
You promised just a comforting hand.

Your Golden opportunity came

Oh but I'm proud of you
But I'm proud of you
Well there's nothing left to make me feel sma

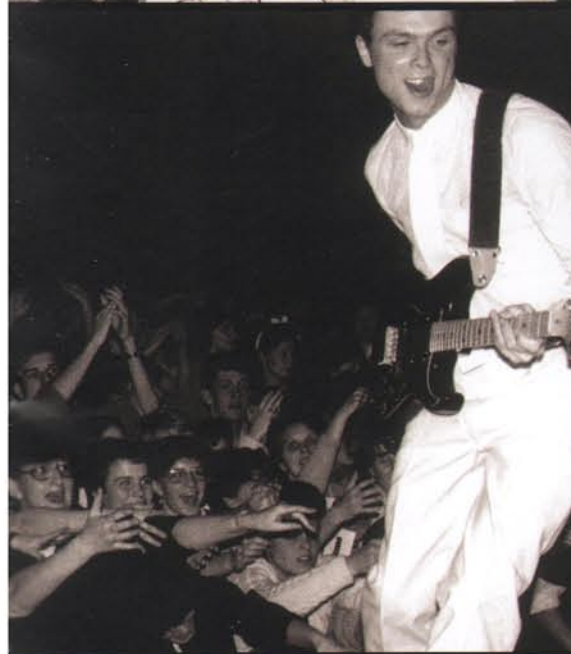
"Gold..."

Always slipping from my hands
Sand's a time of its own
Take your seaside ~~am~~ and write the next
Cos I want the truth to be ~~shown~~ ^{live}



'PARADE', their fourth album, heralded Spandau's global victory march, typified by the exotic locales of the 'I'LL FLY FOR YOU' and 'HIGHLY STRUNG' promos - de rigueur for the emerging MTV generation - shot in New Orleans and Hong Kong respectively.

It was pictures from another part of the globe though that confronted Gary Kemp when Bob Geldof rapped on the window of an antique dealer's where he was browsing in Chelsea, a few weeks before Christmas in '84. The shocking images of the starving millions in Ethiopia that Geldof had seen broadcast by the BBC's Michael Buerk the previous night were about to set off a chain of events involving Spandau and all the other major clubland pop acts of their generation in a way they could never have imagined.



Band Aid and *Live Aid* became the decade's defining pop moments— the biggest selling single and the mightiest concert of the Eighties broadcast to 400m people across the world— all borne out of a couple of typically animated discussions between Geldof, Spandau and their arch rivals, Duran Duran.

Gary Kemp remembers being struck by the uniqueness of the assembled throng as he looked about him on that far too early Sunday morning when 'Do They Know It's Christmas' was filmed and recorded.

"To me what made it so important and so impossible to repeat with today's acts," says Gary, "is that these were all kids from the same scene. Us and Boy George from The Blitz, Duran - the boys whose floor we'd slept on after playing the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham - and George Michael, a Spandau fan from Le Beat Route. These were the biggest pop groups in the world at that time and yet we'd all essentially come from the same place."

While the *Band Aid* single dwarfed the rest of the charts, Spandau enjoyed their own record breaking moment over the festive season as they played six sold out nights at London's Wembley Arena. But that was nothing compared with

their first appearance at Wembley Stadium the following June when they got to share a stage with Paul McCartney, Pete Townshend and Queen for the Live Aid concert.

"My great memory was when Pete Townshend said, 'Follow me up onstage'," says Gary, "so I did and stood in the wings watching The Who doing 'Won't Get Fooled Again.' Martin and I had been huge Who fans and been to see them many times in the Seventies. Then I got a little tap on my shoulder and there's Paul McCartney and Linda saying, 'You were great this afternoon'. I was in rock and roll sandwich heaven."

"I was standing with DJ Janice Long on the side of the stage when Quo started with 'Rockin' All Over The World'," says Tony. "We just looked at each other, looked at the band, looked at the crowd and went 'Oh bloody hell, this is really happening!' Spandau had never played Wembley Stadium before – hardly any of the bands had. It was momentous. Mind, that double skin leather coat was a bit warm. I'd thought, 'It's June. It'll be overcast and a bit chilly.' Hottest day of the summer."

The band returned to Ireland after *Live Aid* to continue work on their fifth album, 'THROUGH THE BARRICADES'. The title track remains Tony's favourite Spandau song and perhaps the most poignant one that Gary has ever written. It was inspired by the death of Thomas Reilly, a Catholic lad from Belfast and friend to the band, known to all as 'Kidso'.

"Thomas worked for our merchandising crew, Bravado," says Gary. "He'd taken me round Belfast when we'd played King's Hall on the Parade tour. He was shot dead by a soldier who was later convicted of murder. Somebody took me to his grave and while I was walking back down Shankill Road and the Falls Road I saw all the barricades dividing the Protestants from the Catholics."

"It was a song that was written in the middle of the night, lyric first. I woke up at two in the morning and things just started popping into my head. It was one of the quickest songs I'd ever written."

The success of the 'THROUGH THE BARRICADES' single and album was followed in '87 by Spandau's largest European concert tour to date. They sold out football stadiums in Italy, had guns pulled on them by over zealous police in Sardinia and were given the keys to the city of Madrid after playing a one-off open-air show to 80,000 fans. If anyone had told them as they were being whisked away in yet another police van that they were only one tour away from a 19 year breakup no one would have believed it.

A sixth album, 'HEART LIKE A SKY', followed two years later. But as Gary and Martin's acting careers took off, thanks to their critically acclaimed performances as Ronnie and Reggie Kray in the film *The Krays*, and Tony prepared to cut his teeth on a solo career, it seemed inevitable that there would be a hiatus for all things Spandau.

What no one realised on that Tuesday night in March 1990, as they left the Edinburgh Playhouse stage, was that they would have to wait until now – nearly two decades down the line - to do it all again.

That's shocking time-keeping by anyone's standards so with more than 20 hits to unfurl – not to mention their brand new single 'Once More' - it's probably best to keep the final words short and sweet.

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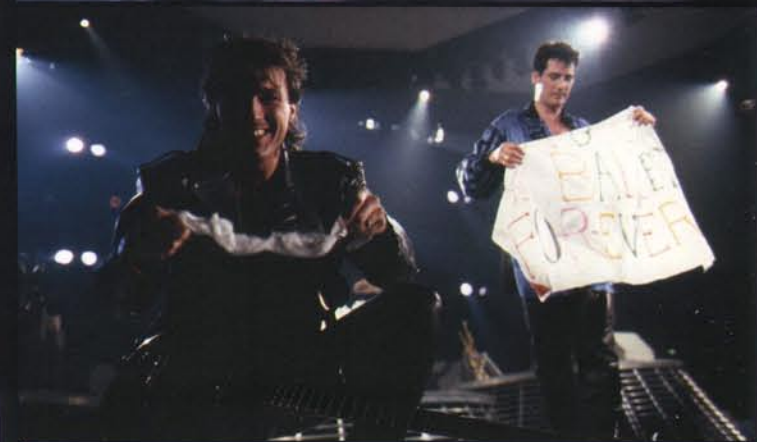
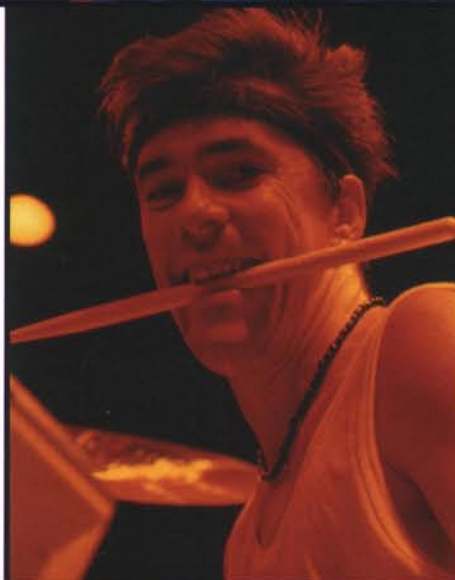


“This is a greatest hits tour,” says Tony. “It’s the one we should have done many years ago. People have been waiting a long time for this. The new album ‘ONCE MORE’ is the first taste of a new Spandau sound but in the live arena people don’t want to hear a different version of ‘TRUE.’ They want to hear pretty much what we did 20 years ago and relive that vibe and that moment.

“This is as many hits as we can cram into two hours. We’re here to give the fans what they want.”

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome back the four schoolmates and that good-looking baby brother: Tony, Steve, John, Gary and Martin. Or as you know them, Spandau Ballet.

Paul Simper - formerly of No.1 magazine, Melody Maker & New Sounds, New Styles.



photos: Patrizia Savarese