

History

The Early Days

This story started at school in 1972 when rivalries between a couple of bands were put aside and the decision was taken to merge and form what was to become Cock Sparrer. The boys had loads of different influences at the time which has helped over the years create what could be considered the unique Sparrer sound of today. The early years were spent mostly doing covers while Burge's songwriting skills were still being honed. The line-up from the beginning was Micky, Burge, Steve and Colin accompanied by Will who would often guest DJ at any gig. It should come as no surprise to anyone that knows him that he would often get paid more than the band. Gigs were grabbed when offered but were few and far between until the band started their own residency at Trinity's Youth Club in East Ham. Playing most Fridays they slowly built up a following which mainly consisted of girls from the local Grammar School – Happy Days!! Unfortunately a lot of these girls had boyfriends that weren't too enamoured by their new allegiance to the band and it wasn't unusual for most Friday nights to end up like a scene from Gunfight at the OK Corral. Once the fights were out of the way, it was over to The Burnell Arms to spend whatever money had been taken on the door that night. Life was simple in those days – music, beer and girls.

By 1974/5 gigs were becoming more regular. Sparrer had become one of the first calls that Terry Murphy from The Bridgehouse would make when bands blew out and there were many Monday nights spent playing to three people in Canning Town. It was worth it for the free rehearsal and the beers and the plate of sandwiches that Terry and his wife Rita would lay on for after. Support slots at The Marquee in London's Wardour Street would follow as well as regular gigs at The Dagenham Roundhouse thanks to Paul Fenn at the Asgard Agency. The bands reputation was growing but often for the wrong reasons. They were banned from most of these venues on more than one occasion but always managed to turn up the next day with an apology and a cheeky grin to get back in the good books.

By now Sparrer were 7 strong with Will and Glen (The 'Ed) Smith taking care of roadie-ing duties and Garrie Lammin on rhythm guitar. They had lived in (and done runners from) a number of different flats in and around East London including one in Green Street, Upton Park where on one occasion Col got arrested for nicking Will's stuff - it's a long story!!

1976 saw the boys move a few further stops down the District Line to Dagenham and into a house that "The Young Ones" could have been based on. Out of work and on the dole, days were filled with playing football over the park, writing songs, blagging gigs, fiddling the electric and trying to find enough money to pay the rent. By this time the mode of transport to get to and from gigs was an old Post Office van. It ran on red diesel and had to be started with a blow torch. By the time they got to the gig their voices were shot because they had to SHOUT REALLY LOUDLY to be heard over the engine. Either that or be semi-conscious upon arrival because of the fumes that the engine would chuck out.

1976 saw Cock Sparrer sign their first management and publishing deal with Orange Music who through their connections got the band signed to Decca in early 1977. Purely by coincidence and still a strange quirk of fate, it wasn't until many years later that they realised that the fella that actually signed them to Decca was none other than Daryl's Dad (Daryl was five at the time!!) Still struggling to find gigs it was a surprise when in April '77 a couple of the band went round The 'Eds house to be told by his Dad that "he wasn't in, he's gone up to London to sort out your tour with The Small

Faces” WHAT?? He was having a laugh surely? THE Small Faces? Steve Marriott, Ian McLagan, Kenney Jones etc? It couldn't be, he must have mis-heard him. With no mobile phones it was an anxious few hours before The 'Ed returned to confirm that Cock Sparrer were in fact to support The Small Faces on their 12 date UK comeback tour starting the following week.

The red GPO van made it to the first gig in Preston before The Small Faces road crew took pity on the band and offered to stick the small amount of Sparrer gear in the back of their trucks for the rest of the tour. Steve Marriott lost his voice after a couple of shows and for a while it looked like the whole thing may be cancelled but he recovered fairly quickly and no dates were lost. They say you should never meet your heroes but everyone connected with that tour were very gracious to the Sparrer boys and this is the thinking that they try to maintain to this day when it comes to dealing with their own support bands. Kenney Jones lent Steve anything he wanted from his kit, Ian McLagan would always accommodate requests for Faces songs during soundchecks and Micky spent an afternoon locked away in a basement with Steve Marriott trading Humble Pie riffs on their guitars. The tour ended with two shows at The Rainbow, Finsbury Park followed by an end of tour bash at The Dickens Inn, St Katherines Dock, London where a serious attempt was made to drink every last drop of alcohol in the place.

Punk Rocking

“Runnin’ Riot” was released in July 1977 having been recorded in Decca’s West London studios in Hampstead earlier in the year. The session was produced by Nick Tauber, a producer of some repute who had earlier worked with Thin Lizzy. By the time of its release Punk was everywhere in the media and Decca thought they had it made with Sparrer and Slaughter and The Dogs signed to the label. The only problem was the Sparrer boys didn't really want to be punks. Well not punks in the way that the press were portraying punks, all gobbing, safety pins and bondage trousers. They loved the punk ethos that anyone can have a go but there was no way that they were dressing up in anything other than Doc Martens and jungle greens. The fall out with Decca began almost as soon as it had started with the label trying to push the band in one direction and Sparrer flatly refusing to play the game. This is demonstrated perfectly by the release of the band’s second single “We Love You” in November 1977. The reason for the plain white cover on the release is purely down to the band’s refusal of the suggestions that the record company had put forward. The strained relationship limped on. The Decca offices were used to string a bunch of gigs together in October 1977 and again in early 1978 including the infamous Stratford Town Hall launch of “We Love You”. Dignitaries from the music world were bussed to the gig which was intended to be a bit of a Sparrer showcase but ended with Alan “Fluff” Freeman, the radio DJ, going home early because someone threw a pickled onion at him. Overuse of a dry ice machine resulting in the band not being seen by a large part of the audience for much of the show, an over zealous stripper whose physical contortions could have put Olga Korbut to shame and a venue totally unsuitable to have live bands meant that what on paper seemed like a good idea at the time ended up a bit of a disaster. It was however the first of many times that Sparrer and The UK Subs were on the same bill, so there was some good to come out of it!

The 'Ed had decided to stay on and work with Mel and Bev Bush after The Small Faces tour so Sparrer needed a new roadie. At the time Will was working at a hospital in Goodmayes, Essex dispassionately referred to as The Barley Lane Nut House when on one particular occasion was accused by a co-worker of having stolen his NME. A rapport was quickly developed and not only had this bloke heard of Cock Sparrer, he had heard “We Love You” played on the John Peel show several nights earlier. Will came back to the house in Dagenham after work and told the others that he had met the perfect roadie to replace “The 'Ed”. The questions came thick and fast “Can he drive?” –

“No”, “Has he roadied for anyone before?” – “No”, “Does he know one end of a mike stand from another?” – “definitely not, but he drinks like a fish and reads the NME” He was in! Andy Doré, the original Fist Magnet, joined the ranks of the unpaid.

It was also around this time that a few regular faces started to show up at Sparrer gigs. This bunch of mates from East London, who came to be known affectionately as The Poplar Boys were extremely handy to have around should gigs develop into a bit of a scrap. They always had each others backs and often diffused situations that without their presence could have turned nasty. They were never responsible for starting trouble at any Sparrer show but because they took no nonsense from anyone quite often finished something that others had started. Friendships between some of The Poplar Boys and the members of Cock Sparrer are still as strong today as they were in 1977.

Both “Runnin’ Riot” and “We Love You” got to the lower reaches of the charts but insufficient sales and a band refusing to toe the party line meant that it wasn’t long before Decca and Cock Sparrer were going in different directions. In September 1978, having sold all of their equipment - including some they didn’t own! - they moved out of Dagenham and headed for the USA.

It has been said that Cock Sparrer weren’t that relevant in the history of Punk in the UK and have been accused of not being around in that first wave of Punk. It’s true they didn’t have number one records or make many headlines but the following is quite interesting –

“Runnin’ Riot” was released -

3 months before “Never Mind the Bollocks” by The Sex Pistols

8 months before Sham 69’s “Borstal Breakout”

4 months before “Where Have All the Bootboys Gone?” by Slaughter and The Dogs

A year and a half before “Alternative Ulster” by Stiff Little Fingers

The same month as “Peaches” by The Stranglers

16 months before “Teenage Kicks” by The Undertones

3 months before The Buzzcocks “Orgasm Addict”

And only 6 weeks after “White Riot” by The Clash

I’m So Bored With the USA

The boys acquired £50, one way tickets to New York with Freddie Laker. Because this was the first introduction of the “budget airline” in the UK he had to set up his desk in the grounds of Gatwick Airport with marquees to keep the rain of the queuing public. By the time they arrived at the airport it was something like a three day queue. Thanks to some bribery in the form of a shopping trolley full of beer, Will managed to get the boys miraculously to the front of the line by the next morning. Once on board the DC10 their money started to quickly evaporate as the drinks trolley never got past row 27.

The plan was to tout the band around to as many agencies and record companies as they could, to try and drum up some interest. After a couple of days in New York there were no takers and the decision was made to Go West Young Man. Will decided to come home and the five remaining arranged to deliver an Oldsmobile Cutlass to Tucson, Arizona within 7 days. Money and food were

already getting tight and a welcome pit-stop was made at Andy's aunt's house in St Louis where after the Dagenham diet of a pork pie cut into 4 pieces, the provision of steaks and ribs on the BBQ was manna from heaven. The air-con in the Oldsmobile packed up fairly early into the trip and the sight of five skinny, pasty yet sweaty English blokes shirtless but dressed in shorts and Doc Martens raised a few mid-West eyebrows but they got to Tucson on time and duly dropped off the car. The Greyhound bus took them on the last leg of the journey into Los Angeles. Several more attempts to raise interest in the band were made in LA including seeking out one of the guys that had worked with them at Decca but to no avail.

Col was the first to head home being repatriated by the British Consul, Steve and Burge stayed on for a while in LA while Mick and Andy headed back to St Louis and Chicago.

Back to work

It was of course back to no-where to live, no gear, no money and no band. Everybody went off in different directions to get jobs to pay back debts or back home to Mum for some proper food.

It was a period when Cock Sparrer as a gigging band didn't really exist. Everyone still met up for a beer and a night out but they all thought that Sparrer had run its course. Nothing was ever said, there was no big fall-out, no musical differences or anything like that, the band just took a breather.

Steve and Burge went off to join The Little Roosters with Alison Moyet for a while, released an album and a couple of singles but any success still eluded them. Burge and Will tried their hands at promoting, most notably The Clash at The Notre Dame Hall, Leicester Square and were heavily involved with the re-emerging Mod scene promoting the likes of The Purple Hearts and Secret Affair.

It was all well and good but it wasn't Cock Sparrer.

Meanwhile going on in the background was the release of Oi – The Album which contained "Sunday Stripper" and partially through this, the birth of the musical genre that Cock Sparrer would forever more be associated with.

England Belongs To Us

In November 1982 Cock Sparrer released "England Belongs To Me" on Carrere Records, a song that was only a title and nothing else when Burge sold the idea to them. The single was recorded in the White House Studio, Old Church Street, Chelsea which was owned by the bands' manager and publisher, Cliff Cooper. Cheap studio rates were negotiated with the money that was forwarded by Carrere to record the single but was actually used to record both that and most of the tracks that were to later become "Shock Troops". By this time Chris Skepis, a mad Brazilian (from the East End of Brazil obviously) and a lovely fella had been recruited to play rhythm guitar via an ad in a shop window.

Its release was heavily supported by Garry Bushell and Sounds who provided some welcome reviews but was pretty much ignored by everybody else.

Carrere liked the single and agreed to support and finance an album and dutifully forwarded enough cash to do so. Little did they know that most of it was already recorded and ready to go and so in true Sparrer fashion a lot of the funds went straight over the bar of the pub next door to the studio. Well they didn't want to waste it did they??

“Shock Troops” was recorded and mixed in just over two weeks. Songs that had been written and stored away which covered all aspects of the bands’ experiences with the scene, former record companies and band members, friends and characters they knew and the world at large could finally be heard. Or so they thought.

Micky played on every track on the album but didn’t fancy getting back in the van to do the gigs to promote it. Another advert was placed and Shug O’Neill was asked to join on lead guitar.

A number of gigs were organised including The 100 Club and The Fulham Greyhound in London. Record company executives were obviously invited along to get to know the band better and to start to think about the marketing strategies required to launch the album.

Unfortunately it all kicked off at these gigs, several people got hurt at The Fulham Greyhound and the only sound heard for the next few months was the stony silence of non-returned calls followed by the smell of friction created by the furious back pedalling of the record company.

A deal was finally struck and the album was released in November 1983 by Razor Records – a subsidiary of the subsidiary!

Someone at Syndicate Records must have liked “Shock Troops” because they agreed to commission a second Sparrer album that was to be rather lazily titled “Runnin’ Riot in’84”. Shug’s influence on the songs on this album is very apparent but once again more could have been done in terms of the writing and production of this release had all of the monies found their way to the studio rather than The Dog and Duck!

All Roads Lead to The Astoria

The period following the release of “Runnin’ Riot in ‘84” can probably be considered the bands’ most inactive. Don’t get me wrong, socially it was really busy with every member getting married, having kids and working to pay the bills, it’s just that Cock Sparrer didn’t gig for a while.

Steve Bruce grew his hair and embarked on a new career, that of pub landlord. His first boozier was The Flying Scud (nothing to do with The Falklands!) in Hackney Road, quickly followed by a move to a pub in Bethnal Green Road which Steve renamed The Stick of Rock. A PA system and DJ booth were quickly installed and The Stick of Rock became a leading East London music venue. Steve even managed to persuade Burge and Micky to join the house band on the odd occasion. It was while Steve was here that punters realised that the guvnor behind the bar used to be the guvnor behind the drums in Cock Sparrer and he began to receive requests and offers to reform the band and start gigging again. One particular offer was to play at The Astoria in Tottenham Court Road. A meet up over a pint was organised and it was quickly agreed that this was one of the dumbest ideas that had ever been presented to the band. Who was gonna come? The Astoria was a big place, holding up to 2000 people, big bands, proper bands played there. Once they had confirmed that the promoter wasn’t certified insane, they agreed to do it. It would be a laugh, something to tell the grandchildren about in years to come. As Chris Skepis had gone back to Brazil they had to find another rhythm guitarist. Steve mentioned this kid called Daryl who had played with his band The Elite a few times in the pub and knew all the Sparrer songs better than they did (still true today!!) An impromptu rehearsal was organised and the Astoria gig was confirmed for October 4th 1992. The headline slot was deferred to The Adicts with The Lurkers and The Elite also being added to complete the line-up. Still convinced that they would be playing to an empty hall, several get togethers were arranged to run through the songs including one on the afternoon of the gig in The Stick of Rock. It’s funny now

to hear the number of people that claim to have been there for that last minute rehearsal, queues would have gone around the block if everybody had really turned up.

The show itself was sold out. People came from all over the world to see Cock Sparrer for what was intended to be a one off occasion. They sang every word to every song, which was helpful because Col forgot a few.

Sitting around the dressing room afterwards, sharing a litre bottle of Leibfraumilch - classy!! - with Arthur from The Lurkers, he suggested what Sparrer should really do was to go to Europe. The scene was healthy there, especially in Germany and they would really love to see the band. Grabbing the bottle back from Arthur, who had clearly had enough by this time, little thought was given to his suggestion until the dust had settled a few weeks later.

Germany Calling

An offer was received from a small German label, Bitzcore to record and release a new Cock Sparrer album. With the funds provided up front, the thinking caps went back on, Burge was locked away in a darkened room and "Guilty As Charged" was born.

As is the usual Sparrer method of operation, tapes were dropped through letter boxes, half finished songs were completed, additional verses were added and it finally looked as though the album was beginning to take shape. One song that was delivered with strict instructions from Burge "this is finished, it doesn't need anything and I'm quite proud of it" was "Because You're Young". Quite right too!!

Studio time was booked at The War Rooms in Shoreditch and "Guilty" was quickly recorded and mixed.

A 14 date European tour was organised to promote the album although as with The Astoria, the band were pretty sure no-one was gonna turn up. The tour took in Germany (10 dates), Austria, Italy, France and Belgium and included playing in school halls, squats, clubs, aircraft hangars and the occasional concert venue. But people did come and from all over and friendships were forged with people that they met along the way, many of which remain intact today. The most visited country on the tour was probably Switzerland which they passed through on loads of occasions to get to somewhere else!! The tour wasn't that well organised in terms of geography and journey planning and they were soon sick and tired of going backwards and forwards over "the bleedin' Alps".

Germany was proving to be a second home to Sparrer and more gigs were organised to further promote "Guilty As Charged" and the follow up "Two Monkeys", released in 1997.

The set list by this time was growing and growing. Obligated to play some of the songs off the new albums there was no way that they would ever get away with not including the majority - if not all!! - of "Shock Troops" whenever they played live. Whilst wanting to sell as many albums as they could, their priority, which remains the same today, was to give everyone a good night out.

2000? Quite a busy year by Sparrer standards

By 2000 the gig offers were coming in thick and fast. The year started with a 4 day trip to the USA. Always an ambition for the band, this visit, which took in New York, Boston, San Francisco and Los Angeles helped to convince the boys that people outside of the UK and Europe had heard of the

band and wanted to hear the songs live. When discussing the various venues to be played several options were put forward for the New York gig but the band really wanted to play CBGBs because of the history and heritage that the club had. The second day was Boston and an all ages, matinee show. Which was fine except for the poor sod that had driven for 8 hours to get there only to be told he'd missed the gig. The Dropkick Murphys were a great help in transporting the guys around their home town and providing the backline for the show. Col returned the favour by adding some vocals to a track off their new album. San Francisco was a cracking show, a lot of which (along with some tracks recorded in New York) found their way onto the later released "Runnin' Riot Across the USA" album. The final gig in LA turned out to be the biggest of the four which nicely rounded off Cock Sparrer's first official visit to the US.

This year also saw the band's first collaboration with Darren Russell-Smith's Holidays In The Sun promotions with dates in the Basque Region with The Cockney Rejects and The Boys and then in Berlin with The Dropkick Murphys.

Everyone knew in the back of their mind that the day would come when Cock Sparrer would again play in England. It was just a matter of when.

Morecambe (or Morecombe as Darren Russell-Smith's tee shirts read!) 2001

That opportunity came in the shape of Holidays In The Sun, Morecambe July 2001. It seemed a strange place to hold a punk festival. The old seaside town up on Britain's west coast famous for its cockles came alive as 5000 punks and skins from all over the world descended to breathe life back into the old girl. Billed as the 25th Anniversary of Punk, the weekend was still pretty much ignored by both the music and mainstream press, which funnily enough didn't seem to matter to those attending. It was almost as though this was a private party with all of your best mates turning up. Sparrer were knocked sideways by the welcome and response that they got when they played on the Saturday night, when The Market Arena was packed to capacity and a big sweaty singalong was had by all.

Still only doing the occasional gig, Cock Sparrer returned to Morecambe in 2003 where they filmed and recorded footage for the "What You See Is What You Get" dvd. The idea was to put together a live recording of the show plus numerous bits of unseen footage including a hand held video taken by the band themselves of their trip to the USA in 2000. This lot coupled with some guitar tuition from Micky and a trip around their old East End haunts ended up as nearly 8 hours of material.

Blackpool 2006

By the summer of 2006, Darren and Jennie Russell-Smith had moved the biggest punk rock n roll circus to Blackpool. I think they saw it as a bit of a quest to re-invigorate seaside towns that had seen better days. I'm not sure what the locals' thoughts were as the place was invaded by hordes of punks and skins from all over the world. I would imagine that they were grateful for the extra income from this unexpected source. Stag and Hen do's were pushed off the front pages of the local papers, replaced by images of Mohawks and Dr Martens.

Sparrer were asked to play the Saturday night to a packed house in The Empress Ballroom where several punters commented that they thought the floor was going to collapse it was bouncing up and down so much. A good night was had by all.

A new album, are you sure?

There had been many offers for Cock Sparrer to get back in the recording studio during the ten years after "Two Monkeys" and on several occasions the band had sat down to discuss just that subject. Those discussions always came to the same conclusion however and that was that unless they were totally happy with the quality of the songs to be used, they wouldn't bother. The band were on such a high after the success of Blackpool that once again the subject was raised over a pint or three but this time it was decided to do a bit more about it. An earlier meet up with Lars Frederiksen of Rancid in a pub off Tottenham Court Road had added more fuel to the flame when Lars made it clear that he'd want to get involved in any future recording project. Like the band, he recognised some of the failings of the previous releases and wanted to produce an album that everyone could be proud of. Slowly the idea of putting a new Sparrer album together was taking shape. Over the next few months CDs were once again dropped through letterboxes with demos and ideas for songs on them and in January 2007, the band started on a series of rehearsals that would eventually knock those songs into shape. The plan to get Lars involved in the recording of the album failed to materialise due to his work commitments and the timescales involved and eventually it was decided that he would mix the album once recorded. Sessions were block booked at Pat Collier's Perry Vale Studios in South London and having spent a couple of months rehearsing and arranging the songs, "Here We Stand" was recorded over a three week period in May. Lars mixed the album over the course of the summer of 2007 after which it was handed over to Captain Oi for release. Although it was also planned for the album to come out in the States, that wouldn't happen until a couple of years later and not until Pirates Press Records got involved. Having spent quite a while - by Sparrer standards - writing, arranging and recording the new album, thoughts moved to the launch.

Why Wolverhampton? Well it's in the middle ain't it!

Cock Sparrer at The Civic Hall, Wolverhampton on Saturday November 3rd, 2007 will go down as a seminal evening in the history of the band. Darren Russell-Smith and the boys and girls from Rebellion put together a fantastic line-up consisting of Goldblade, Deadline, The UK Subs, Slaughter and the Dogs and Cock Sparrer to launch "Here We Stand". People came from all over the world to make this night one of the most memorable Sparrer gigs ever. Packed to the rafters, everybody sang, shouted and punched the air to every song in an atmosphere of fun and celebration. Even the new songs that no-one had heard yet were well received. This was Sparrer's only show of 2007 and it seems everyone was determined to have a good time. By coincidence, a former roadie of the band, The 'Ed had been working at The Civic Hall the previous evening with Van Morrison which was a polite, demure, half of shandy affair compared to the full-on, what're you drinking? what have you got left? party atmosphere provided by the Sparrer faithful on the Saturday night.

Gigs and gigs and gigs

Cock Sparrer is never gonna be the sort of band that will put together a 40 date tour these days, it would kill 'em. They continue to play the odd gig (and some of them have been very odd!!) here and there and as long as they're enjoying it and people still want to come and hear the songs, it will carry on. As soon as that changes then it will be time to hang up the Martens.

After Wolverhampton, 2008 included two shows in Vienna and back in Blackpool for Darren and Rebellion following which they decided to dust off their passports and get out to a few different places that they hadn't been to before or been back to for a while.

2009 started with a belter in Berlin in the snow at Punk & Disorderly and included three trips to the USA for gigs in Texas, Chicago and in November, San Francisco for the 5th Anniversary of the band's new American record label, Pirates Press. Countries visited for the first but hopefully not for the last time that year included Serbia, Norway and Holland while they also played the Ruhrpott Rodeo in Germany and Oktoberfest in Girona. The gig in Oslo saw the introduction of a new verb to the Sparrer vocabulary, which is to be Hein-ied. Will met up with our German mate Heini for a swift half in the afternoon of the gig and woke up 12 hours later having missed the show completely.

The band were keen to do both festivals and club shows, as well as wanting to fulfil a promise to themselves to play London again. Finally, two nights at the HMV Forum, Kentish Town in March 2010 were planned to achieve this ambition.

Two differing line-ups saw Friday night host The Rabble, Deadline, Street Dogs and Agnostic Front while Saturday had a real '77 feel to it with The Exposed, UK Subs, Penetration and The Boys. After the show on Friday night they were told by The Forum management that bar takings for the night almost broke the house record. Col had a bet with the manager that the record would definitely go on the Saturday but £28,000 worth of beer had to be consumed to do so. Well my friends, you nearly did it. In fact I think the record would have been broken easily if they could have kept up and were a bit quicker behind the ramp. They admitted afterwards that they had underestimated the number of bar staff required to fulfil the thirsty needs of the Sparrer faithful. Still, £52,000 taken over the two nights put a smile on their faces. A good effort my friends, a good effort.

Other gigs in that year took in Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and the Czech Republic for the first time and saw returns to Italy, Belgium, France, the Basque Region, Scotland and Germany.

In January the band re-entered Pat Collier's studio to re-record "England Belongs To Me" for Dan Hardy to use as his entrance music when entering the octagon prior to his UFC fights. Dan was also keen to help out on backing vocals and as Daryl said at the time "He can do whatever he likes, we ain't gonna argue with someone who beats people up for a living!"

2010 also saw the publishing of Steve's book "The Best Seat in the House" which documented his recollections of the band's story and allowed him to share his fantastic collection of Sparrer memorabilia gathered over the last 30 plus years.

It also saw the inclusion of "I Got Your Number" on the soundtrack of the movie "Jackass 3D".

Towards the end of the year Pirates Press released the ultimate Cock Sparrer collection in a limited edition, vinyl box set. Produced in two parts with one being all of their live material, Cock Sparrer Essentials has over 32 sides of the band's back catalogue as well as posters, Steve's book and other goodies. The package took over 18 months to put together and is something that the boys are rightly very proud of.

2011 saw the chaps heading to Vegas for Punk Rock Bowling which was always a danger. The 24 hour city of sin didn't disappoint but thankfully they all came back in one piece and no-one got married by Elvis in a drunken prank. Dates in Berlin, Leipzig, Croatia and a return to Blackpool we're all highlights. September saw the band hit South America for one night in Buenos Aires, Argentina and one night in Sao Paulo, Brazil where they were joined on stage by the mad Brazilian ex guitarist Chris for a rousing version of "Take 'em All".

2012 – 40 YEARS OF SPARRER

2012 was a very busy year for the band who were celebrating their 40th anniversary. Amongst the many special gigs organized there were 6 with Rancid, who by coincidence were celebrating their 20th year together. The idea was for two shows to take place in Rancid's hometown of San Francisco with the 'return leg' in London, later in the year. Duly, two sold out shows took place at The Warfield Theatre, San Francisco in March with three - also sold out shows - at The Forum in London in December. These were topped off with a final show together under the Rebellion banner in Birmingham UK, also in December 2012.

Amongst the other gig highlights of that year were a massive show at the Alsterdorfer Sportshalle in Hamburg, as well as a trip to play Philadelphia and Boston. The journey between the two gigs was in what can only be described as a "Simpsons style" school bus. Not the most comfortable ride but made easier by West Ham playing in the Championship Play Off Final as they travelled. Poor signal reception meant that only snippets of game were watched with much swearing and threats to throw laptops out of the bus window etc. All was good in the end though. The band's beloved West Ham won the game 2 -1 and were back in the Premier League.

2012 also saw the release of the band's 40 Years album, a compilation of tracks chosen individually by the band members with a brief explanation as to exactly why that song was chosen and what that particular song meant to them. Each person had to choose 3 songs with "England Belongs To Me" and "Because You're Young" going on automatically. What seemed a fairly simple idea resulted in a lot of hand wringing and cursing as old favorites were either left out or snaffled up by other band members.

Outstanding Gigs

With Cock Sparrer now playing more gigs than ever before, the opportunity to visit many new places and make many new friends has been gratefully accepted by the band. They obviously treat each show as special and whether they are playing to 50 people or 5000 the same level of professionalism and attention to detail is applied. In saying that, there have been some that stand out, either because of the venue or location. They have played in the grounds of a castle in Serbia and a bullring in the Basque Country. For the Pirates Press 10th Anniversary party in San Francisco in October 2014, the street was closed off, a stage erected and a good time was had by all. If you had asked any member of the band whether they ever thought that they would have the opportunity to play Las Vegas, they would have laughed you out of the bar. But thanks to Punk Rock Bowling, Sparrer have played there in 2011, 2014 and again in 2017. As well as enjoying PRB on the road in New Jersey in 2016. Of all the highlights over the years one evening has to be included. Probably one of the smallest gigs the band has played in a while, was in the 12 Bar (RIP) in London's West End for Steve Bruce's 60th birthday celebrations. Packed with family and friends and with sweat running off the walls and ceiling, Steve's special birthday was certainly one to remember.

2017 – “Forever”

With a ten year gap between Cock Sparrer's last album "Here We Stand" and the present day, 2017 sees the release of their new full length album, "Forever". Recorded over a four month period

between the end of 2016 and February 2017, "Forever" is a collection of songs written in what only can be described as "the Cock Sparrer way". Anthemic, filled with hooks and with lyrics relating to real life, the album is the next chapter in the band's amazing career.

So where does it go from here? Who knows? They remain humbled that people still come out in their numbers to see them and will always be grateful for that.

When Cock Sparrer formed in 1972 all they wanted to do was have a laugh, pull some birds and give everyone a good night out.

2 out of 3 ain't bad.