

'Cramp Styling'. Ian Harrison, **Mojo**, May 2003
 'Psychotic Reaction'. Cathi Unsworth, **Mojo**, September 2003



Spot the difference: Alfonso Pinto and Holly Golightly vs Cramps cool.

Cramp Styling

Let's re-enact a 1978 Cramps show right here!

THE 1978 bootleg *The Cramps Live At Napa State Mental Hospital* is a unique document of rock'n'roll's close relationship with insanity. Artists Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard enjoyed it so much they staged and filmed its re-enactment to a crowd of psychiatric patients at London's ICA on March 3. The Cramps-alike band featured Alfonso Pinto of The Parkinsons as Lux Interior and Holly Golightly as Poison Ivy. The audience came from the mental health groups Core Arts, Sound Minds and Mad Pride. "The boundaries between on and off-stage performance quickly blurred," say Iain and Jane, who also re-enacted Bowie's 1973 *Ziggy* farewell with *A Rock 'N' Roll Suicide* in 1998. The film, *File Under Sacred Music*, is to be screened at the Site Gallery, Sheffield and the ICA, June 13.



Psychotic reaction

In 1978 The Cramps played a mental institute. Twenty five years on a bunch of UK artists re-created the gig. **Cathi Unsworth** asks why...

IN A RARE moment of liberal thinking, in June 1978, the authorities of the Napa State Mental Institute decided to book The Cramps to play for the patients. Whether their choice of acts reflected a punk subversive in the ranks of mental health care workers or was simply an experiment in therapy, is unclear. But, thanks to the fact that they cared to film it, for the past 25 years, *The Cramps At Napa* has become a cult video of legend. This was The Cramps at their most primal and exciting, fresh from recording *Graveyard Hits* with Alex Chilton, and, judging by the 25 year-old footage, their captive audience certainly dug the vibe. A stage invasion begins on the second number, *The Way I Walk*, when a young woman helps out vocalist Lux Interior by screaming into the mike. What's *Behind The Mask* seems to lift any inhibitive medication the patients may have been on and by the time the band start *Human Fly* there's a real party going on. *Twist And Shout* proves the biggest crowd-pleaser, and the gig ends with a patient taking over on the vocals of *TV Set*.

A quarter of a century on, UK artists Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard reconstructed the gig at London's ICA on March 3, 2003 (See pic bottom right and news story MOJO 114). Recruiting veteran *Headcoat/ees* Bruce Brand as Bryan Gregory, Holly Golightly as Poison Ivy, *The Parkinsons'* Alfonso Pinto as Lux and *Wilbebeests'* drummer John Gibbs as Nick Knox, they called the event *File Under Sacred Music*. To ensure authenticity, Iain and Jane contacted *Care Arts* (a Hackney-based mental health arts organisation), *Sound Minds* and the *Mad Pride* collective to advise and take part as the invited audience. The event was shot in grainy black-and-white, creating a distorted video echo of the bootleg.

A startling idea, but what of the intentions behind it? "The Napa tape was one of the most amazing rock'n'roll shows we'd ever seen," Iain explains. "We wanted to do was create a new live experience out of an essentially replicated, artificial situation. We had an incredible band - and they worked really hard. Despite the fact that we were essentially on a 'film set', we did everything possible to make the experience of the performance real, no stopping and starting, no crew running around, no direction given to the audience."

"I thought it was a strange thing to be asked to do" says Holly Golightly. "I didn't really understand why anyone would want to remake the original."

The quality of the footage and the replication of the music is just about spot on. The audience's reaction is more muted than at Napa and, because the venue is the ICA, it looks more like a typical gig. The audience reaction to each song, however, is spookily similar. "You can't set about attempting to recreate something from the past without knowing that you can never 100 per cent achieve it," says Jane. "But that's what makes it interesting, that failure creates the space for a new event to take place."

One thing Iain and Jane can be proud of is the reconstruction of Bryan Gregory's stunning black-and-white bouffant on Bruce Brand's head. "The wig is a long, disaster ridden story!" they laugh. "Which turned out OK in the wash, quite literally. We did all the costuming and that one wig was the single biggest headache! It's a human hair wig from a dodgy shop up the Mile End Road, cut, dyed, re-cut, washed, dyed again, cut again..."

File Under Sacred Music will be exhibited from October 17-December 6 at the Impressions Gallery in York. More dates are to be confirmed. Find out at: www.fileundersacredmusic.com

