

# JOHNNY MOPED

Yes, honestly it is Johnny Moped, that solid old-school punk band from Croydon / London / UK. That punk band that influenced so many other Brit-Punk or whatever-Punk bands. Did you know such people like Captain Sensible (later in The Damend) or Chrissie Hynde (later in The Pretenders) were members of the original Moped line up ? Well, you would know that already if you would have seen the documentary “Basically Johnny Moped” (2013) made by Captain Sensibles son Fred Burns...

In 2016, 38 years after releasing the first album “**Cycledelic**” they came along with a full new album: “**It’s a real cool baby!**” - released on **Damaged Goods Records**.

In 2017 Johnny Moped hit the European mainland - for the first time since 1978 – to play a few shows.

Three **original members of Johnny Moped**, that’s Johnny Moped, Slimy Toad and Dave Berk, Jacko Pistorious and Rock’n’Roll Robot (also know as Rob from legendary Ska/Punk band *Case*. **So, let’s shout: “Moped a Go Go !”**

*"Listen, Johnny Moped were better than the Clash and the Pistols put together," a young Shane MacGowan assured me 30 years ago. I can't remember if he was drinking, but he had a point.*

Adrian Deevoy / The Guardian

*"Johnny Moped had all three ingredients necessary for maximum rock'n'roll: amateurism, mayhem & humour. As the proud owner of a pair of Slimey Toad's shorts I give my full endorsement to this silver digital beermat. Essential punk rock!"* Billy Childish

## 2017 news:

# Johnny Moped appears with the song “Darling, Let’s Have Another Baby” on the new Die Toten Hosen album “Learning English Lesson 2”

# Johnny Moped will play a handful of shows in Norway, Netherland, Germany and Great Britain.

It seems this will continue in **2018**



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## Johnny Moped – “It’s A Real Cool Baby” - album out on Damaged Goods Records!

2016 - It’s 38 years since their debut album *Cycledelic* came out to an unsuspecting public via the legendary Chiswick Records label...and now (apart from the *Search For Xerxes* album) the remaining three original members of Johnny Moped, that’s Johnny Moped, Slimy Toad and Dave Berk, are back with a brand new album called *It’s A Real Cool Baby*.

It’s a sixteen track mix of new songs and a revisit to a few live favourites that never got recorded back in their heyday including ‘I Wanna Die’ and ‘I Believed Her Lies’.

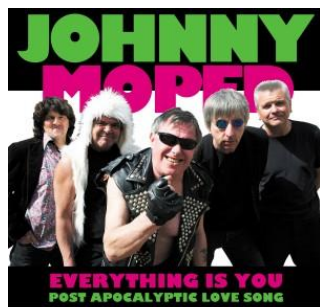
The original three Mopeds have been joined by long time live members, Jacko Pistorious and Rock N Roll Robot (also know as Rob from legendary Ska/Punk band *Case*).



They released their first 7” for 37 years on Damaged Goods last year, ‘Ain’t No Rock N’ Roll Rookie’ hit the number 3 position in the UK vinyl chart and was warmly received by Moped fans as ”sounding just like a Johnny Moped single”, no higher praise could be awarded!

A second single called ‘Real Cool Baby’ came out in late January and like the first it has a non-album exclusive track on the B-side...and comes in two different vinyl colours.

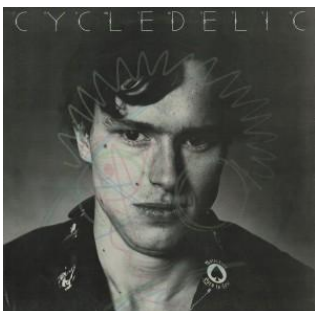
After appearance at Blackpool’s Rebellion festival they will be hitting the road for an album launch show at the Lexington in London (which sold out in a week!), followed by a Brighton show and plans for more dates in the UK, Europe and possibly further afield after that.



A third single is due out in late May 2016 called ‘Everything Is You’ and again it’s backed with a non-album b-side which is the full version of Post Apocalyptic Love Song.

The initial sales for the album included some lovely bundles including t-shirts, scarves, enamel badges & more.

Also reissued the band’s 1978 debut LP *Cycledelic* on neon pink and neon yellow vinyl.



**So Johnny Moped then... well... This was 'borrowed' from the lovely Trakmarx website... [www.trakmarx.com](http://www.trakmarx.com) and from Dave Berks sleeve notes in the Chiswick CD 'Basically'**

*"Johnny Moped had all three ingredients necessary for maximum rock'n'roll: amateurism, mayhem & humour. As the proud owner of a pair of Slimey Toad's shorts I give my full endorsement to this silver digital beermat. Essential punk rock!"* Billy Childish (1995)

## **The Myth Of Johnny Moped's Assault & Buggery:**

On the inside sleeve to Johnny Moped's debut LP, "**Cycledelic**" (Chiswick – Wik 8 – 1978), is the legendary 'Johnny Moped Family Tree'. Anybody who's good at time lines – or has taken lessons from Pete Frame – should track down a copy & try to make some sense of it. For the rest of us, all you need to know is: Johnny Moped were originally called Genetic Breakdown, came from darkest Croydon – & consisted of Johnny Moped (aka Paul Halford), Xerxes, Fred Berk, Dave Berk, Ray Burns (aka Captain Sensible) & Phil Burns.

They jammed all day, everyday, recording the lot as they went – & spent their evenings listening to the fruits of their labours in the company of a few beers in the most outré playback venues imaginable: the Gas Works, Gatwick Airport, on the top of multi-storey car parks – or the local park (where they cooked grub on a portable gas stove). They never played the same song the same way twice, & consequently, Johnny & Xerxes had quite a job keeping up – & subsequently became dextrous at making things upon the spot. Johnny Moped were desperate to start gigging – so desperate, in fact, that they eventually did a gig in Dave's back garden – & paid a few local kids to act as the audience!

**The major problem for Johnny Moped was their singer. To say he was unreliable is somewhat of an understatement – he was constantly AWOL!** Johnny lived with his girlfriend, Brenda, who in turn lived with her mother, who hated the group – & it's members – & was often reluctant to let Johnny out of the house to waste his precious time with childish rock'n'roll shenanigans. The rest of the group had to resort to guerrilla tactics, kidnapping the shaded man-in-black as he came out of work – & bundling him into the boot: Moped Class. This worked fine for tours of the gardens of **Croydon** – but hampered the group's professional ambitions, somewhat.

Sooner or later, **Ray Burns became Captain Sensible**, cut his hair – & beat Sid Vicious to the bass vacancy in Punk Rock visionaries, The Damned. Johnny Moped's first few gigs were as support to The Damned, with Captain playing two sets a night. It didn't take a genius to work out the next bit: Johnny Moped needed a proper guitar player of their own. The advert went a little something like this:

A BIG FUNKY MUNDANE BAND!!! Looking for a local way-out rock group for some work!!! Johnny Moped is looking for a way-out funky bass guitarist into moronic rock'n'roll & pip-squeak progressive stints (male or female) sex not import, must have own bass guitar & sound system. Strictly amateur band. Interesting Phone Dave – 01-684-1931



Two applicants came forward: Slimey Toad & Chrissie Hynde (The Unusuals, Masters Of The Backside, Mike Hunt's Honourable Discharge, & later, The Pretenders). Dave Berk had already played around a bit with Mr Toad – when he'd replaced Chris Millar (Rat Scabies) in Tor (a name Rat would often later invert to Rot). Dave had also had 'previous' with Chrissie & Fred in The Unusuals. The new line up didn't really gel,

however. After only a handful of gigs at The Roxy, Chrissie was ejected on Slimey Toad's orders – because she didn't quite fit in.

By now as settled as any Johnny Moped line up could possibly hope to be, the group contributed the classic "Hard Lovin' Man" to the **"Live At The Roxy"** LP – & self-released their seminal "Official Johnny Moped Bootleg" – before signing to Chiswick Records in a hail of lager.

**The debut Johnny Moped 45 was the raucous & totally indispensable: "No-One"/"Incendiary Device"** (Chiswick – NS15) – the Mopeds were belatedly forced to switch sides due to a BBC objection to the 'stick it in her lughole' refrain on "Incendiary Device" – **"No-One" thus becoming the A-side by default.**

The Mopeds second 45 – **"Darling, Let's Have Another Baby"** – was a masterstroke of marketing genius: released one week, awarded 'SOTW' status in all 3 weekly music papers the next – & promptly deleted the week after (sounds almost legendary in concept – but the harsh reality was that the single was plugged to death by the group's visionary management – but still failed miserably to trouble the scorers down at the BMRB – it was, however, later covered by ex-Drug Addix singer, Kirsty McColl – RIP).

**Johnny Moped's aforementioned debut LP, "Cycledelic", was eventually released in April 1978.** It had been a bummer to record – because by this stage, **Johnny was practically under house arrest after the group's van had run over Brenda's mother** – causing her to finally lose patience with whole scenario. In order to get Johnny to the studio on time, the others met him from work, spun some tale of needing a group meeting in some spurious café or other – & promptly drove him all the way to the studio non-stop. The vocals were thus laid down in one day. A **"Mystery Track"** was added to the LP later at Roger Armstrong's (Chiswick Big Wig) bequest – Johnny did the vocals for this cut over the phone. The "Mystery Track" eventually appeared on the LP in the same place as "VD Boiler" – as a piece of concentric tracking – you got one cut or the other – depending where you put the stylus. Revolutionary. The rest of the LP was made up of live cuts recorded at The Roundhouse. Obviously, Johnny nearly didn't turn up then, either. The group had set up & sound-checked – only to **find Johnny queuing up outside the venue to pay to get into his own gig** – with 15 minutes to go to show time.

Johnny Moped gigs were infamous: Slimey Toad specialised in ridiculous outfits & PA stack climbing – & you never knew what was going to come out of Johnny's mouth at any given moment (diatribes, abuse, surreal episodes). They often played with totally the wrong type of groups – got caught up in the Punk v Metal wars – & toured with Motorhead! They even once played the Hammersmith Odeon – & got booed ON – only to leave the stage to **2,000 people chanting: "Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!"**

Johnny Moped collapsed in a heap heading downhill towards the latter stages of 1978. A second LP was posthumously released in 1991 – **"The Search For Xerxes"** (Delt-LP6) – featuring songs originally written in 1978. There have been the odd re-union gigs from time to time, including the Johnny Moped Big Band revue at the Marquee in the mid-90s – & there could well be more in the future – but that depends, as always, on Johnny.

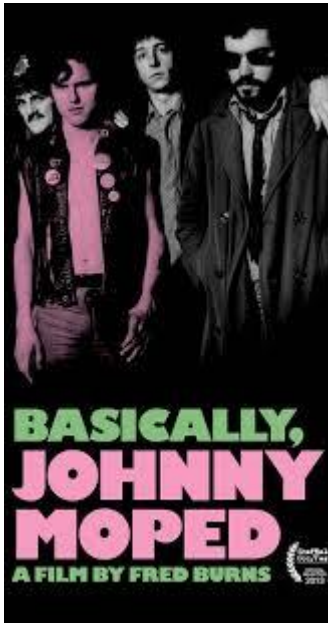
I recently had the pleasure of meeting the charming Mr Dave Berk at a bash for Keith Morris at Dingwalls (or whatever it's called these days). He was a marvellously engaging chap who had the temerity to look younger than me – whilst being – in reality – at least 8 years older than myself. I cheekily asked him if he had any copies of the legendary **"Basically The Original Johnny Moped Tape" 7" 45** (Chiswick – Promo 3) lying around – he confirmed that he had two copies left – & I attempted to buy one of him forthwith. He wasn't having any of it, though – & subsequently sent me a copy free of charge in the post. Hooking him up with Damaged Goods was the least I could do in return – & hopefully – we'll all benefit from that in the long run.

Johnny Moped: essential punk rock. Billy Childish knows, you know.

## **The Guardian :**

### **Basically, Johnny Moped: the perfect tribute to punk rock's idiot savants**

Fred Burns's frank, unflinching documentary is the real – and sometimes surreal – deal, writes Adrian Deevoy



**"Listen, Johnny Moped were better than the Clash and the Pistols put together," a young Shane MacGowan assured me 30 years ago. I can't remember if he was drinking, but he had a point.**

Johnny Moped, punk rock's idiot savants, embodied the daft DIY essence of the times better than any other group. Not for them the artful defiance of Vivienne Westwood's costly clobber or the political posturing of Juanabe conquistadors – the Mopeds came from Croydon and made music for drunk people. Press play on your download of Basically, Johnny Moped and there's Shane in 1977, all self-conscious sneer and spit-spattered shirt up front at the Roxy, pogoing in approximate time to the Mopeds' ramshackle constructions: Incendiary Device, Groovy Ruby, VD Boiler and Darling Let's Have Another Baby.

At last, the great forgotten punk band been have been, well, remembered. Fred Burns's poignant film about a bunch of mates specialising in good-natured mayhem and strange, succinct songs, is the real – and occasionally surreal – deal.

Burns is the son of the Damned and one-time Johnny Moped guitarist Captain Sensible, and therefore had unlimited access to his father's friends. That he captured the more elliptical thoughts of the band's unsettlingly eccentric singer at all is an achievement. The director's findings are the frank, unflinching recollections of men once festooned in badges and drenched in beer. Yet, as in all lives, there is love, romance, tragedy, longing and leaving along the way. It's a music documentary that tells its story without patronising subject or viewer – a rarity in a bullshit-smearing business. Johnny Moped were funny, fully dysfunctional and fortunate to form when they did, but what set them apart from the army of Ramones' re-fits was their frontman, Paul Halford (aka Johnny Moped).

Diagnosing themselves with typical 70s insensitivity as "82% mentally disabled", Johnny was a complex case: part park bench liability, part open-hearted poet. Their charismatic vocalist, Poundland sound and risible styling (the colander-as-headgear never really took off) found a loyal audience in Britain's stickier, strike-struck pubs. Their year was 1977.

Such was the band's success that they could afford to shed their second guitarist, one Chrissie Hynde, who still seems genuinely miffed by her dismissal despite her blessed post-Mopeds years. "No hard feelings," sniffs the great Pretender. Basking briefly in the media spotlight, the Mopeds managed in 1978 to produce Cycledelic, a loveable, outside lavatory of an album that casually straddled the worlds of captains Beefheart and Sensible. And Johnny was the key.

"I knew there was a genius album in that guy," marvels Captain Sensible, "and Cycledelic proves me right, doesn't it? It's just the most sensational album." Gazing now at Johnny's dark, troubled eyes peering out from the brilliant "lightbulb" sleeve of Barney Bubbles still sends a shiver down your bondage strides. It was the cheekier little brother of Never Mind the Bollocks.

But, as with all things Moped, the wheels soon came off. As John Lydon would, Johnny married a woman some 20 years his senior. But Brenda came with a domineering mother-in-law who had alternative plans for her daughter's beau. Soon the band had to kidnap their singer in order to complete recordings and honour gig bookings. Ignominy beckoned. Then "rock'n'roll dole".

Had Johnny moved to the Mojave dessert and made human dung paintings, he'd doubtless be hailed as a Significant Artist. Instead, he cares for his ailing wife in a non-leafy quarter of Surrey and drinks cans of White Lightning. A pathetic piss artist? Not a bit of it. He's as happy and fulfilled as Shane or Chrissie or the Captain. Burns' film offers neither a cute denouement nor a bleak future, just a bloke frying his breakfast and humming a tune. And if Billy Bragg and Kirsty MacColl's tender rendering of Darling Let's Have Another Baby, accompanying the closing credits doesn't moisten your eye, then perhaps nothing will.

• **Basically, Johnny Moped is available from [basicallyjohnnymoped.com](http://basicallyjohnnymoped.com)**