

The Nonce's 15th Anniversary Release of ROADIE FOR THE KINKS
Rookie Phenom & the Gang finally make it to CD!

Here it is, folks, "**Roadie for the Kinks...and Other Rock & Roll Mementos**" for the first time ever released in a non-vinyl version. We're not exactly sure what CDs are made of, but this recording is truly the stuff of dreams. Dreams of glory and riches in the music industry? Hardly. More like the fevered dreams of a lunatic named Rookie Phenom, who thought that a group of disparate individuals from far-flung backgrounds could craft a common language through songs.

First heralded by a 7-inch, 45 rpm single, "**Roadie for the Kinks/Sometimes I Wonder**", the full LP, issued in late-summer 1989, fleshed out a concept of "30 years of rock & roll manic depression" with a set of songs drawing on such diverse Anglo-American pop music influences as Buddy Holly, Byrds, Beach Boys, Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Doors, David Bowie, Squeeze, Sex Pistols, Clash, Bruce Springsteen . . . and, of course, Ray Davies and Dave Davies of the Kinks.

Not to mention all the dead rockers cited in the classic, "**Buddy Holly Sunglasses**." Rookie Phenom, more or less the lead singer of The Nonce, once told a radio interviewer that among his major influences were "anyone who died before the age of 40." As he wrote on the original LP's liner notes: "*We just took what we needed, and besides, they were dead anyway and weren't using it.*"

Recorded on a four-track port-a-studio in an Oakland living room, the LP represented the best intentions and spotty production values of the early Do It Yourself (DIY) movement that still remains a vibrant component of modern music. Like many other self-produced, garage and living-room bands of the era, The Nonce's recording of "Roadie" found a welcome home on college and alternative radio playlists around the world (the first radio-play royalty check came from Hungary, of all places). Even the notorious radio maverick, Dr. Demento, spun the disc on his syndicated program that year.

"*A spiffy tune that will never be forgotten,*" said one college radio programmer, who we didn't even have to pay. "*The lyrics capture both the childlike innocence and cutting wit that has defined the Davies oeuvre,*" wrote a record reviewer, who must have had a degree in English Literature. "*Good LP, good songs, good vocals, good production,*" wrote another, who might have been on drugs at the time.

But the best compliment of all came when the engineers at Konk Studios, the Kinks' recording home in London, told us they made cassettes of the songs for members of the band's roadie crew as Christmas presents. Then, in 1990, the Kinks were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on the first ballot and our lives were complete. Almost.

Many of the tunes from this LP, along with a few others penned by the team of Phenom/Nonce—including the semi-hits "**Bell Bottoms & a Bottle of Wine**" and "**Time Goes, Bye**"—later became part of the sound track of "**Rock Radio KIDZ**" a musical comedy written by Jeff Hanley and produced by Theatre Jones in early 1993. The show never reached Broadway or profitability, but it sure was a lot of fun. There are still some T-shirts, I'm told. Someday, we'll release versions of the great songs that never made it to CD: "**Rainbow in a Black & White World**", "**Extraordinary Girl**" and "**Attitude**."

These are the words of one radio DJ, who gushed over The Nonce and the Roadie LP when it was first released in 1989: "*The band is GREAT, but who the fuck is the band?*" Now, 15 years later, the truth can be told:

Rookie Phenom, singer, raised in the small New Jersey town of Turnpike Exit 14A, gave up the music industry to become an award-winning business journalist and author of books about California's electricity crisis. But don't blame him.

Phil Nonce, lead guitarist, who first put his head between stereo speakers in a London record shoppe, eventually moved down under to Sydney, Australia, where he uses psychology and skill to teach runaway teens how to express themselves through songwriting. But don't blame him.

Mark Thomas-Doubting, bassist, and ex-member of a bootleg version of Black Oak Arkansas (don't ask), can still be found on the San Francisco music scene, playing in a band that combines science-fiction sounds and martini-lounge music for a new generation of hipsters. But don't blame him.

Glenn Rock'n'Ruehle, the world's first Savant-Garde drummer and Nonce keyboardist, soon turned his short attention span to creating the soundtrack for the Silicon Valley dot.com revolution. But don't blame him for the way it all turned out.

Sometimes I wonder if it's all because of you and me....

Liner notes by Arthur O'Donnell, © 2004, Rear View Recordings.

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