

THE MOD REVIVAL

BRINGING BACK THE SHARP-SUITED 60s SUBCULTURAL MOVEMENT FOR THE 70s AND 80s
STEVE O'BRIEN

The Jam's Bruce Foxton, Rick Buckler and Paul Weller pictured in 1977

WHAT IS IT?

Fuelled by the music of bands such as The Who and the Small Faces and also the sounds coming out of Motor City in the US, mods were one of the 60s best-dressed and musically literate subcultures. By the end of the decade, the movement had largely died out, but in the late 70s it enjoyed a punk-assisted comeback. The Jam may have emerged from the punk movement, but they were too soused in musical culture to really belong to the Johnny Rotten club, and most of that inspiration was the

mod music Paul Weller had grown up with – The Pretty Things, The Yardbirds, Geno Washington & The Ram Jam Band, as well as Motown and Stax. Then in 1979, the *Quadrophenia* movie landed. The Who's nostalgia-driven rock opera turbo-charged the mod revival, and bands started to appear that married the fire of punk with the melodic sounds of the previous decade – The Lambrettas, The Chords, The Prisoners, Secret Affair... The movement was so instantaneous there was even a tour

that same year, named March Of The Mods, featuring Purple Hearts, Secret Affair and Back To Zero.

There was more than a flavour of that 70s/80s mod revival in Britpop. It wasn't just the wings haircuts and Ben Sherman shirts, it was there to see in bands buddying up with that era's big beasts (Oasis with Paul Weller, Blur with *Quadrophenia's* Phil Daniels), while 'new mod' was a tag given to some of the era's more 60s-inspired outfits from Menswe@r to The Bluetones.

ESSENTIAL ARTISTS

THE PRISONERS



With their Vox Continental organ-powered sound, The Prisoners never tried to disguise their 60s influences, in a decade – the 1980s – where even an iconic band like The Beatles were considered passé. Formed by Graham Day (vocals/guitar), James Taylor (organ), Allan Crockford (bass) and Johnny Symons (drums), they took their name not from Patrick McGoohan's cult TV series, but from The Vapors' debut single. They released their first album, *A Taste Of Pink!*, in 1982. After an initial split in 1986, keyboardist James Taylor formed jazz-funk outfit The James Taylor Quartet and The Prisoners have rebooted the band in the noughties for live shows.

THE LAMBRETTAS



Named after the iconic Italian scooter favoured by Mods, The Lambrettas wore their influences proudly. They were sharp-suited, had the right haircuts and clearly listened to the correct bands. Their most famous song, a cover of The Coasters' 1959 hit *Poison Ivy*, made No.7 (it was suggested to them by Pete Waterman – yes, that one), while their debut album, *Beat Boys In The Jet Age*, broke Top 30, securing the quartet a slot supporting Madness on tour. With later singles failing to chart, the band broke up in 1982, shortly after the release of sophomore LP *Ambience*. A version of the band are in existence today, with only guitarist Phil Edwards and bassist Ant Wellman from the original line-up (singer Jez Bird having passed away from cancer in 2008).

SECRET AFFAIR



Singer Ian Page and guitarist Dave Cairns had, as New Hearts, supported The Jam on tour, and put out two underperforming singles – *Just Another Teenage Anthem* and *Plain Jane*. But after a style makeover (i.e. they got themselves down to Carnaby Street), they reinvented themselves as the suited-and-booted Secret Affair, winning a Top 20 hit with the Who-evoking *Time For Action* in 1979. A similarly 60s-flavoured album followed, peaking at No.41. The band split in 1982, but have reformed a few times in the past 20 years, releasing a belated fourth album, *Soho Dreams*, in 2012.

HONORARY MENTION EDDIE PILLER



© Dean Chalkley

There are few names more titanic in mod circles than Eddie Piller. Even before he'd become a convert himself, he was already steeped in mod culture, with his mother having run the Small Faces Fan Club in the 60s. A punk before the 70s mod revival, he had his head turned by The Jam, and by the end of the decade had launched his mod fanzine called *Extraordinary Sensations*. In the mid-80s, he founded the label Countdown Records, issuing the mod revival album *5-4-3-2-1 Go!*. He later formed Acid Jazz Records and has most recently put his name to various mod compilation albums.

ESSENTIAL ALBUMS

THE JAM

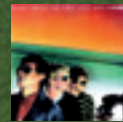
ALL MOD CONS (1978)



Punk purists may well have scoffed at Paul Weller and Co, but history has proven them all wrong. The Modfather always had more musical nous than his three-chord peers, and The Jam's third album is able to stand tall next to all of Weller's heroes' best LPs.

THE LAMBRETTAS

BEAT BOYS IN THE JET AGE (1980)



As taut and adrenaline-powered as The Jam, and with pop tunes to die for, The Lambrettas' debut still sounds fresh today. It deserved better than its No.28 placing on the UK Albums Chart.

THE PRISONERS

A TASTE OF PINK! (1980)



The Charlatans seem to import their entire sound from this debut LP from Rochester's The Prisoners. This is a thrillingly raw and unpolished album that somehow manages to sound like every great 60s mod band all at once.

ESSENTIAL SINGLES

SECRET AFFAIR – *TIME FOR ACTION*

TEENBEATS – *STRENGTH OF THE NATION*

THE MODS – *ONE OF THE BOYS*

PURPLE HEARTS – *FRUSTRATION*

THE JAM – *PRETTY GREEN*

ESSENTIAL READING

EDDIE PILLER – *CLEAN LIVING UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES: A LIFE IN MOD – FROM THE REVIVAL TO ACID JAZZ*

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

VARIOUS ARTISTS –

EDDIE PILLER PRESENTS

THE MOD REVIVAL (DEMON) ■

