

his own label under the major's protective umbrella, he leapt at the chance and took Primal Scream and The Weather Prophets, then Creation's most bankable assets.

"We had no money. The perception in England via the NME was that we were a pretty big label in 1986/87, but the reality was me, my partner Dick Green and one room. And we had these bands that majors were trying to pinch, so the idea was, 'Why don't we set something up like a Blanco Y Negro situation and I'll be the A&R guy?' That was the first major f—up I ever made, and it killed The Weather Prophets and nearly killed Primal Scream.

"I mean, those bands would have gone anyway. Luckily, I found a way to remain involved. It really taught me a lesson: unless you have control, don't go to a major. I didn't know what I was doing. They gave me a deal because I broke the Mary Chain, so they thought that if you can do it once, you can do it four other times.

"It doesn't work like that. So they all failed. Elevation failed in every way because the records weren't good and they never sold either."

Post-Elevation, Creation came close to going bust. ("Simply because of Elevation, we'd stopped signing bands," states McGee. "It was only Felt and Biff Bang Pow! that were keeping it going, literally. And Momus.") Small wonder, then, that Alan holds Guy Chadwick in high regard today. For it was amidst the worthy but marginal projects – the Phil Wilsons and Nikki Sudders – and the downright

dodgy ones – remember Emily? Blow Up? Apple Boutique?! – that The House Of Love emerged and brought back a taste of the glory days. 'Christine' and 'Destroy The Heart' remain classics in anyone's rock ready reckoner, while their debut album was the first truly great LP the label had released in at least two years.

But it was to be a relatively short-lived liaison – once again,

"It is great fun being Malcolm McLaren. It's no' that much fun sitting folding sleeves for Meat Whiplash! It's much more fun to be hanging out in Paris sipping cocktails at four in the morning with people telling you you're wonderful!" – Alan McGee

Creation had one eye fixed on the bank statements.

"Guy came to me in '88 and said, 'We want to go to a major, we're leaving you, but I want you to be our manager'. So I wanted them to stay on Creation, but in real-life terms that was that. It was a fait accompli. Plus, 20 per cent of £400,000 is £80,000, and I could make eight albums for that! We've had our ups and downs, but we're mates now, I love the guy. He's just a bit of a mug, ultimately."

Sorry?!

"I think he just got corrupted by the money. They signed to Phonogram, got hundreds of thousands of pounds publishing money and he just lost the plot. Really, when the band took a turn for the worse – and I don't like the individual concerned at all – was when Terry Bickers left. At one point they could have really done it: Chadwick wrote great songs and Bickers was an incredible guitar player, a

you get to the airport and expect the limousine... Whenever that happens I always laugh, you just can't take it seriously. Whereas The House Of Love got to the point where they turned up at the airport and expected the limo."

Alan McGee has a reputation for fierce loyalty, both towards his staff and his bands – perhaps because, in many cases, both are also his friends. None less than Primal Scream, who, were it not for their close personal bonds with McGee, would most likely have folded after 'Sonic Flower Groove' and the Elevation debacle.

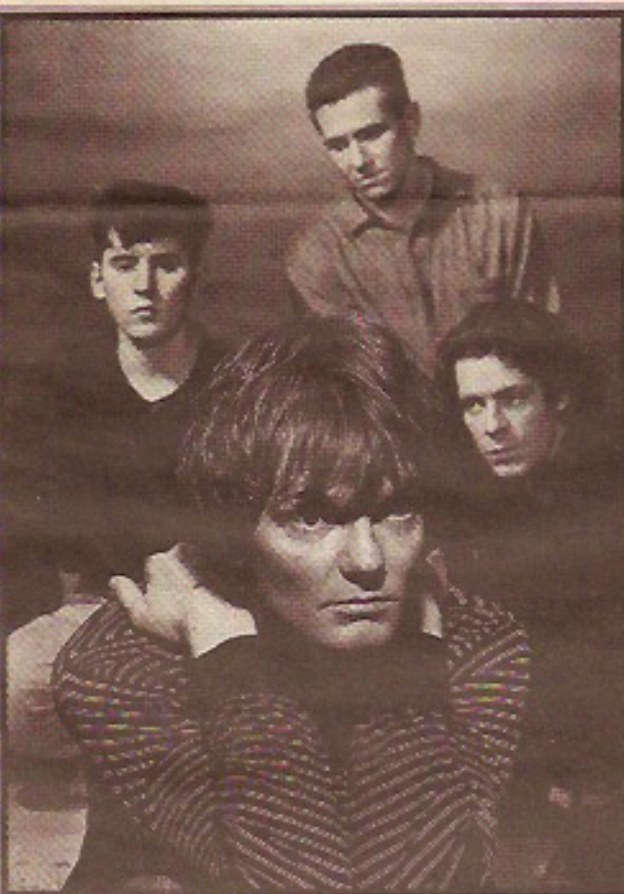
"I've been friends with these three boys now for 20 years, ten years before their group. You've also got to remember when they came off Elevation, Primal Scream were f—ing cold. I was probably the only person in the world that really loved them, and so whether we liked it or not, we were there for each other. From where they started to what they've become I think is pretty fascinating."

That's putting it mildly. From 'Velocity Girl', through (cough) 'Ivy Ivy Ivy' to 'Loaded', 'Higher Than The Sun' and now (cough!) 'Rocks', is one hell of a journey. Can you reconcile the changes they've undergone?

"To me, it's not that strange, but I suppose if you don't know them that well it's gonna look like there's been a lot of major U-turns. I think the big thing for them and me was 1988, discovering acid house. 'Cos we used to go out in Brighton, me and Throb and Bobby, and we

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PICTURE: STEVE DOUBILE



Our House: cheer up, it happened anyway...

GUY CHADWICK (HOUSE OF LOVE)

"MY FEELINGS towards Creation are really warm. They've developed so much since we were on the label. I remember our album wasn't even released on cassette, that's how unsophisticated it was.

"We did fall out a bit. Funnily enough, I saw him just before Christmas. I hadn't seen him for a few years and it was really nice, we spent the evening chatting about old times. We fell out through conflict of interest and nothing more than that. The label became his priority very quickly after he became our manager, so it became a bit of a difficult relationship. But I've got really strong feelings about him, he's still, in all my experience, one of the few people I'd consider to be a genuine music fan, who cares about making records for the right reasons. I think he's had his fair share of luck, but he's had his fair share of misfortune as well. He's one of these people who have a great gift for communication.

"The thing is, he's not a manager. To be a manager you have to almost be completely selfless, let the group get on with the famous bit and the ego bit while they look after the money, but it's not in his nature to be like that. He's a very gregarious person, he's got a bit of an ego as well. His record label is to him what a band is to someone like me. It just never worked, but he was such a great person to have around you."

What was it like being on Creation?

"When we signed the main groups were The Weather Prophets, and Primal Scream were making their first album. The reason I went to him was because of his involvement with the Mary Chain, but they had just left him and it wasn't a very good time, he couldn't give away records and was really hated by the press. But there was still a reasonable togetherness, and we felt we were with the right label. They gave us enough time to develop, he was good in that way.

"Alan's a really nice guy and as genuinely moral as you can get, he means it. He just seems able to retain his integrity while having to deal with a business that's 99 per cent arseholes."

How do you think he'll celebrate the tenth anniversary?

"He's been celebrating ever since I can remember so I don't think one extra day is gonna make any difference."