

The House Of Love



1990 sees paradise regained for Guy Chadwick after a bad bout of dry rot, rising damp and high mortgage rates. Gez Richmond is our spy in the house of pop.

And it was all going so well: a clutch of fine singles, a debut album breathlessly touted as the 'greatest debut album ever' and in Guy Chadwick, a slightly precious, literate and articulate mouthpiece – a new pale, thin hero to court and be courted by the press. They left Creation Records, home to many a lovable moptop, and signed to Phonogram. Despite the odd grumble from indie purists everything was coming up roses in the garden of The House Of Love and everyone was happy.

Soon, however it all started to slide away. Their first two singles on Phonogram, the rush-released "Never" and its follow-up, "I Don't Know Why I Love You", both flopped, the latter undeservedly. Their second album was scrapped, the band unhappy with its content. Guitarist Terry Bickers, increasingly discontented, left The House Of Love amidst a flurry of rumours of impending doom. All the while pressure from the nervous record company grew.

Then, from out of nowhere, a masterstroke was pulled off. Their first single, the strident, almost anthemic "Shine On", released in 1987, was re-recorded. Despite a few reservations about its selection as a single, it was a hit, and with the release of a new album, **Fontana**, imminent, Guy Chadwick can afford himself just a little smile.

Given everything that happened last year, he seems reasonably pleased with the fruits of his labour: "It's as good, possibly, as it could be.

under the circumstances. I'm infinitely happier now than I was six months ago."

Guy Chadwick is a real 'song' writer, who takes great pains to create atmosphere and tension. "Hannah", for example, the opening song on **Fontana**, has an epic feel to it ("It should have an epic feel – it took a year to write!"), without pomp or bombast it still sounds like a stadium show opener. So why, with an album's worth of new songs, re-release "Shine On"? Could this indicate a lack of confidence in the new material?

"Not at all. I always knew how good a song it was. I just needed it to be properly heard. It was my decision." But what would have happened if it hadn't been a hit? Chadwick's reply of "I don't really know" hinted that he was heartily relieved to know he'll never have to find out. This time round there was quite a difference in the marketing, with a multitude of limited edition formats (as opposed to a pressing of just 3,000 copies in 1987).

When we did Top Of The Pops I thought we managed to look pretty cool actually.

"Basically we're just not big enough to not need them. But there was no compromise with the song and none when we did *Top of the Pops*. We kept our integrity and I thought we managed to look pretty cool actually."

Maybe ... Chadwick has, in the past been pictured as a malcontent swathed in acres of dogtooth struggling with the unspeakable – see the sleeve of the single "Never". Was this an attempt to pick up the odd stray, disaffected Morrissey fan or is he really like that?

"It was cold. No, I'm not," came the curt reply. The point was not pressed.

Asking him if he felt that he had alienated any of the band's fans by leaving Creation brought an equally emphatic response: "I was never made aware of the stigma of signing to a major label. The same people come to see us."

The House Of Love, with a new guitarist, are currently on an extensive tour of Britain, winning more new fans and rewarding the faith of older ones by playing new songs with verve and confidence, a far cry from the showcase gigs at the ICA last year. Patchy performances and rumours of rifts made for uneasy evenings.

"You must understand that none of us wanted to be there. It was a bad time for us all. I'd be constantly fighting with Terry (Bickers, departed guitarist). He just wouldn't play what I'd ask him to play. But that's all behind us now."

No-one needs The House Of Love quite like Guy Chadwick does. It is his baby. It took an unsuccessful solo career to convince him of the need to have a band around him, but he never lost faith in his songs. This is borne out by the fact that he has elected to play in towns too small for bands of similar stature to bother with – he simply needs his songs to be heard.