

— an instrumental jazz LP written and recorded in two days by Duffy and Ainge — came in a cloud of pleasing confusion.

A band move to Brighton had coincided with the stirrings of acid house, and one of the true Felt triumphs followed in November; the futurist, alien Space Blues EP should really have been an album.

Knowing that one more LP would complete the 10, Felt's farewell *Me And A Monkey On The Moon* was recorded in under a fortnight in Eastbourne with The Sound's Adrian Borland producing. An introspective, almost rustic album with direct songs about Lawrence's early life, it's one of their best.

"I was 28, 29, and beginning to reflect," he says, "mainly thinking that, *Shit*, this band has been nothing but heartache and a 10-year depression. In the '70s when I was a kid, it was like summer all the time. That's the point I was getting to, 'cos I know we were winding down and it was, What was all that about? And what was all that *for*?"

On discovering that Creation's cash-flow meant it couldn't be released until early 1990 — thus negating the grand plan — Lawrence negotiated a release on Cherry Red subsidiary *él*, formerly run by Mike Alway. The album made it into the shops on November 13.

There were other circles to complete. A final six dates concluded at Burberrys club in Birmingham on December 19. *The Pictorial Jackson Review* bassist Mick Bund supported with his band Mexico 70, and was surprised to see Maurice Deebank in the audience.

"I said typical fan type things to him," says Bund, "but he didn't say much and didn't seem like he wanted to be there."

After a valedictory blast through *Ballad Of The Band*, Lawrence recalls Deebank coming backstage and complaining about guitarist Neil Scott playing the chords for *Primitive Painters* wrongly. There would be no last minute reconciliation.

"For me, business had been done," says Lawrence. "Get back in the van. No reminiscing. Dropped everyone off. You can't imagine how run of the mill it was. In my mind I was convinced that a great thing had just ended, but I couldn't convince anybody else of that fact."

When Felt ended, Gary Ainge was working as a toilet cleaner. Lawrence and Deebank would meet again in the early '90s when

the guitarist played a session for Saint Etienne and his former singer had formed *Denim*, his anti-'80s protest group. "We got the tube together and he'd completely changed," says Lawrence. "He told me that he'd recognised that what Felt did was unique and very special, and that it had taken him all this time to realise that fact."

WHEN INTERVIEWS BEGAN FOR THIS PIECE, Lawrence had new instructions for his old bandmates: "be brutal", as he hated great-days/old-pals music features, he explained. Though Felt was a group with few practical rewards — Duffy remembers signing on for his entire tenure, while Phil King says Lawrence did once buy him a KitKat from a petrol station in France — ex-members seem united in their esteem for their *sui generis* leader, complaints about not being able to contribute songs, cheese vetoes and on-stage dancing bans notwithstanding.

As of now, Lawrence's strange voyage of a life become art is ongoing, with *On The Hot Dog Streets*, the new LP by his 'novelty rock' group *Go-Kart Mozart*, out soon. He also talks of a new singer-songwriter album, adding that he has a "great" custom-devised surname in waiting.

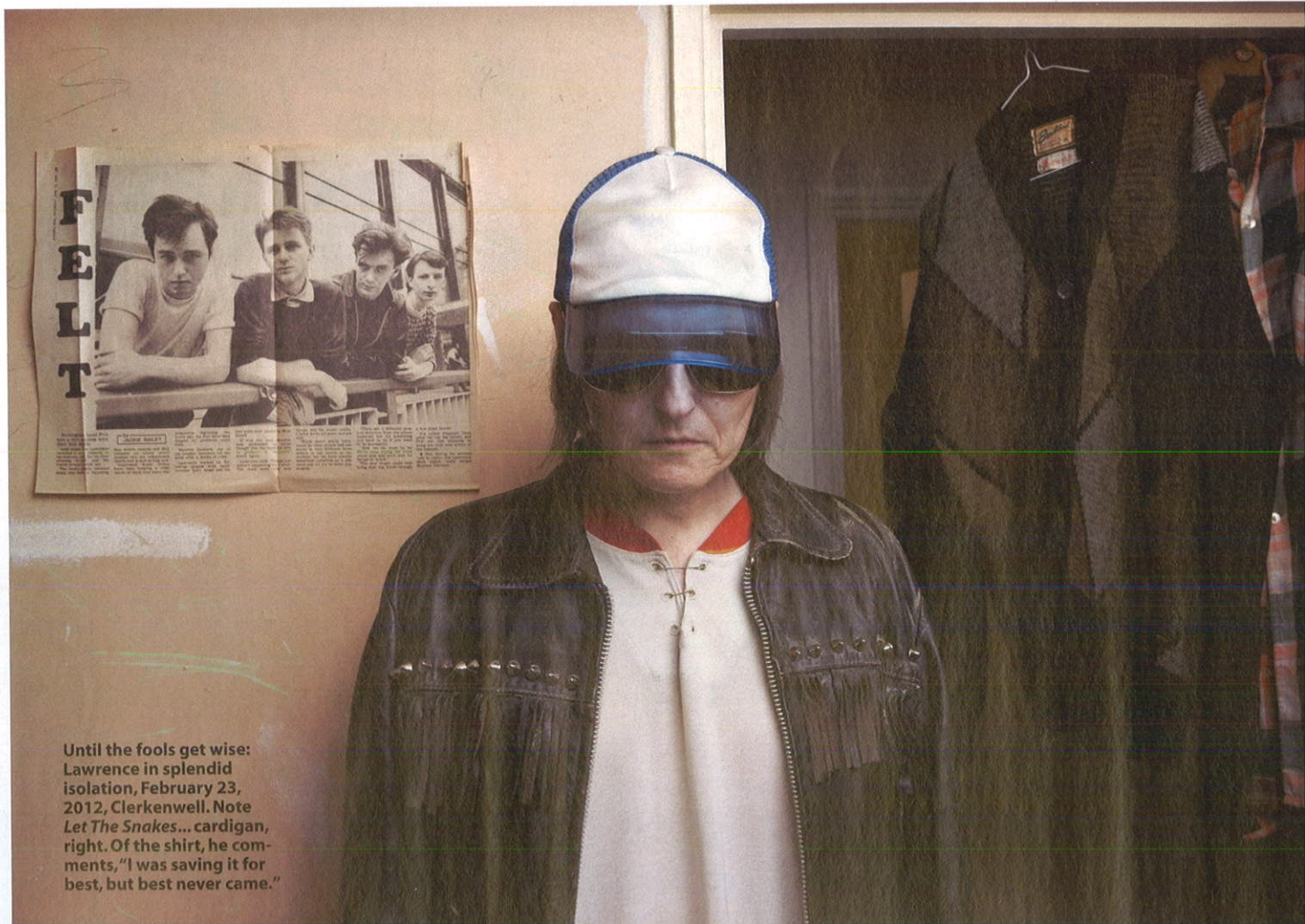
As we prepare to part, Lawrence declares himself pleased with Felt's posthumous recognition.

"I'm getting used to the fact that we've arrived at a certain level," he muses. "I see us now with those '80s bands — The Smiths, Orange Juice. I feel we're now officially a legend."

The question remains, though; need this recognition have taken decades? And was he surprised that obscurity beckoned?

"Yeah, totally!" he laughs. "Every record we made, I thought freak things would happen with them and they might be hits. So if someone says, 'Didn't you understand why you didn't get anywhere?' I say, No. Because in this business there is no golden rule when you put something out there. Even now — you never know what's going to happen." M

Lawrence Of Belgravia will be screened at selected cinemas in May, some showings to feature a live Q&A with Lawrence. For more information go to www.heavenlyfilms.net



Until the fools get wise: Lawrence in splendid isolation, February 23, 2012, Clerkenwell. Note *Let The Snakes...* cardigan, right. Of the shirt, he comments, "I was saving it for best, but best never came."