



MIRROR MAN

(A Geography Of Sound in Two Acts)

DAVID THOMAS PALE ORCHESTRA & CHORUS

NEO-BEAT MUSIC THEATRE

'A vivid, multi-faceted expression of the troubled space
between memory and reality' Chicago Tribune



In association with





MIRROR MAN

(A Geography Of Sound in Two Acts)

DAVID THOMAS PALE ORCHESTRA & CHORUS

NEO-BEAT MUSIC THEATRE

ON TOUR MAY 2001

- SUN 20 BRACKNELL** South Hill Park Arts Centre 8PM
01344 484123 www.southhillpark.org.uk
- MON 21 COVENTRY** Warwick Arts Centre 7.30PM
024 7652 4524 www.warwick.ac.uk/artscentre
- WED 23 MANCHESTER** Contact Theatre 8PM
0161 274 0600 www.contact-theatre.org.uk
- THU 24 STIRLING** Cowane Theatre 7.30PM
01786 473544
presented as part of Le Weekend
- FRI 25 SALISBURY** Arts Centre 8PM
01722 320333 www.salisburyarts.co.uk
presented as part of Salisbury Festival www.salisburyfestival.co.uk
- SAT 26 LONDON** Queen Elizabeth Hall 7.45PM
020 7960 4242 www.rfh.org.uk
presented by sbc
- SUN 27 BRIGHTON** Gardner Arts Centre 8PM
01273 709709 / 685861 www.brighton-festival.org.uk
presented as part of Brighton Festival

The promoters of this tour acknowledge financial assistance from the Arts Council of England, the Regional Arts Boards, District and County Councils and Local Authorities.

Tap recording and photography are forbidden unless prior authorization has been given.

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Jessy Hunter @ Concert Clinic, 35 Britannia Row, London N1 8QH
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www.concertclinic.com

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CMN has produced this programme free of charge for audiences

CMN - the best in contemporary music on tour

www.cmntours.org.uk

MIRROR MAN

By David Thomas

Narrator: **David Thomas**

Radio Voice: **Bob Holman**

Singers: **Linda Thompson, Jackie Leven, Robert Kidney, Daved Hild**

Musicians: **Keith Moliné** (*guitar*), **Andy Diagram** (*trumpet*), **Jack Kidney** (*sax & harp*), **Chris Cutler** (*percussion*)

Sound mixer: **Dids**

Scenographer & technical director: **Danny Grace**

Tour manager: **Lynne Thomas**

Production assistant: **Jeff Thomas**

Set painting, fabrication & carpentry: **Rod Montague, Andy Joicey & Helen Hobbs**

Management: **Nick Hobbs**

Bob Holman, Daved Hild and **Jane Bombane** contributed to the libretto

Email: perubu@projex.demon.co.uk

Website: www.projex.demon.co.uk

Act 1: Jack & The General

Act 1 happens *Out There*. Across a series of roadside diners and truckstops, under bug-swarmed lampposts -interstate susurrant in the air -characters tell their stories in the blasted light of one more black coffee dawn.

A radio spins out dreams of all the futures that will never be to the backdrop of a haunted neon landscape.

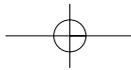
Mirror Man (*David*)
Lost Nation Road (*Robert*)
Florida (*Daved*)
Montana (*David*)
Morbid Sky (*Jackie*)
Nowheresville (*Linda*)
Memphis (*Robert*)
Over The Moon (*Linda*)
Weird Cornfields (*Robert*)

Act 2: Surf's Up in Bay City!

On the other side of every desert is, and always has been, Bay City. Bay City is where the journey ends, where the unstoppable Great Westward Urge meets the immovable Pacific Object and loses, where all travellers must come to a separate peace or be swallowed up. At a bus-stop in the promised land the same set of characters waits for the sense of motion to finally stop - as they wonder just what that mirror actually feel like.

Bay City (*David*)
Ghosts (*Jackie*)
Man In The Dark (*David*)
Black Coffee Dawn (*Robert*)
Bus Called Happiness (*Linda*)
If The Deer Blinks (*Daved*)
Surf's Up (*Jackie & Linda*)
3 Things (*David*)

Mirror Man achieves version 3.0 in the Contemporary Music Network's production. The 2nd Act has been completely rewritten since its premiere (version 1.2) at the Disastrodrome Mini-Meltdown, Queen Elizabeth Hall, April 2-5, 1998. The staging for both Acts has been radically revised. Version 3.0, for all intents & purposes, is a new production. (Version 2.0 featured at the FIMAV festival in Victoriaville, Quebec, Canada, May 21, 2000.)



"Thomas' gnostic argument - that art exists to at once reveal secrets and to preserve them - makes sense of a particularly American - or modern - form of storytelling. In a big, multifaceted democracy, you're supposed to be able to communicate directly with everyone, yet many despair of being understood by anyone at all.

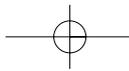
"Out of this comes an American language that means to tell a story no one can turn away from. But this language - identified by D. H. Lawrence in 1923, in *Studies in Classic American Literature*, as the true modernist voice, the voice of Hawthorne, Poe, Melville - is cryptic before it is anything else. It is all hints and warnings, and the warnings are disguised as non sequiturs. The secret is told, but nonetheless hidden, in the musings, babblings, or tall tales of people who seem too odd to be like you or me, like us - like the author who puts his or her name to the story, insisting that he made it all up, that she just did it for the money.

"The whole existence of such people is premised on their attempt to tell a secret, perhaps to discover the secret in the telling, in the stunned, shocked response the telling provokes - and their idea of democracy is premised on the conviction that no one can be at home in a place where it is presumed there are no secrets, that all reality is transparent, that all people are the same. Thus those who tell this story, who want desperately to be heard, will likely mistrust even an imaginary audience. If they are like Thomas... they'll create an aura of portent and unease, but mostly, as it were, sinistramente, with the left hand; by means of unfinished sentences, dead-end monologues, floating images, out-moded phrases, archaic pronunciations, a tone of voice that is blank and addled by turn." - Greil Marcus, *"Double Trouble" (Faber and Faber, 2000), pages 167-168.*

Written and compiled by Pere Ubu founder David Thomas, *Mirror Man* is a hybrid of neo-Beat opera and the tent meeting testimony of a chorus of poet-witnesses whose wind blown voices have been retrieved from ghost towns that lie just over every horizon. Oh, yes, *Mirror Man* is an Opera of The Road: songs about places that don't exist and stories about the people who live in them - ordinary people who've been abandoned by the future, forbidden access to the past, and set adrift in a mirage-like Now where Culture has become a weapon used against them, where all the words are owned by liars and everywhere the media are installed as priests and as the sole mediators between man and the world. Native folk culture in 21st Century America is a driven and heroic scrambling together of Order & Meaning using materials at hand, the detritus of disposable culture, fragments of pop songs, handcrafted iconographies, and the odd issue of *Practical Mechanics* magazine. It is a strange double loopback inversion of cargo culture and you see it everywhere, out there in the middle of nowhere, abandoned gas stations, forlorn handcrafted theme parks: Rattlesnake World, Motel Dust, Cafe Despair... and you ask yourself, "Why did anyone ever think to build that thing out here?" Then you look around and you don't see anyone. "So, it's trailsign," you say to yourself. "There's been something broken pass thru here."

The inspiration for *Mirror Man* is *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters (1869-1950), a sequence of companion poems published in 1915. Melodramatic, even marginally hysterical, it is distinguished by a powerful narrative vehicle. 244 "residents" of a small town's graveyard tell the stories of their lives. The testimonies, and the sum of the points of view, reveal the "secret" of the fictional town of Spoon River.

(Aside from Mr Thomas: I think my fascination with the narrative must have intensified following a hieroglyphic fusion / confusion of Spoon River with the Perry Como ballad, *Moon River*, thereby transforming the pop song into an evocation of some haunted human tragedy that reaches across generations to possess the song's narrator, driving him to dream only of a redemptive, and self-immolating transit of Moon / Spoon River. "In style. Someday.")

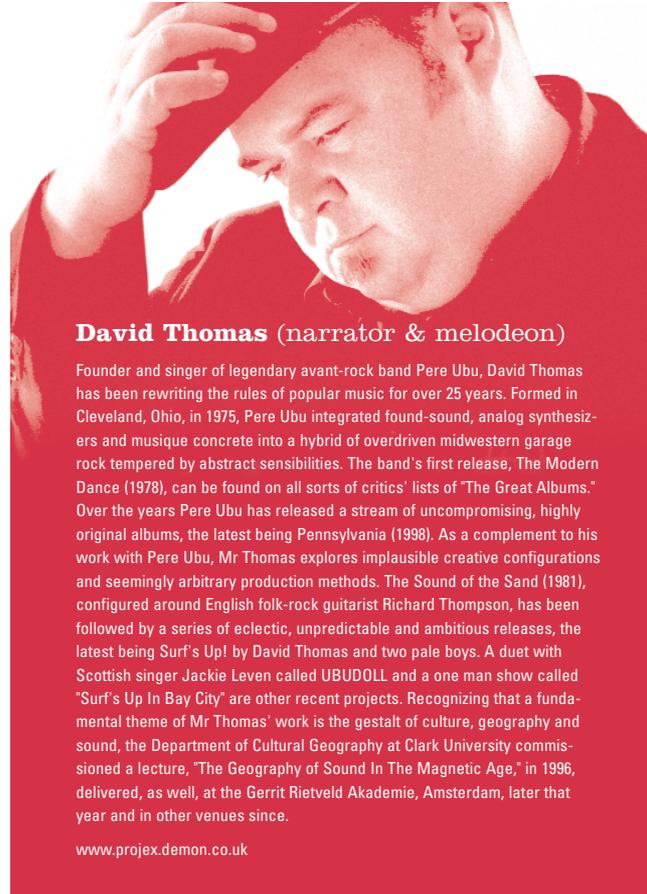


The Pale Orchestra

The Pale Orchestra is an ensemble of singers, poets and musicians. The musicians are accomplished improvisers of both song and soundscape. The singer / poets are masters of the expressive voice - passionate, inventive and capable of improvising revelatory detail. The score and libretto leave space to encourage spontaneity and inspiration in both music and word, resulting in fresh and surprising nuances each night. It is a process that is in part testifying, in part epiphany and in part misunderstanding.

The "original cast" live recording of Act One is available on CD as "Mirror Man, Act 1: Jack & The General" by David Thomas and The Pale Orchestra (Cooking Vinyl Cook CD 175). It was released in 1999.

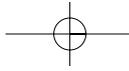
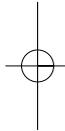
There is no "original cast" recording of Act 2 but many of the songs can be found on "Surf's Up!", a new CD release from David Thomas and two pale boys on Glitterhouse Records (GRCD519). (The two pale boys, Keith Moliné and Andy Diagram, form the backbone of The Pale Orchestra.) Last year's "Bay City", a CD release from David Thomas and foreigners on Hearpen Records (HR1111), might also be of interest. A number of the themes and subsidiary details from Act 2 are explored with a group of Danish (!) improvisers.

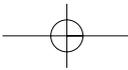


David Thomas (narrator & melodeon)

Founder and singer of legendary avant-rock band Pere Ubu, David Thomas has been rewriting the rules of popular music for over 25 years. Formed in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1975, Pere Ubu integrated found-sound, analog synthesizers and musique concrete into a hybrid of overdriven midwestern garage rock tempered by abstract sensibilities. The band's first release, *The Modern Dance* (1978), can be found on all sorts of critics' lists of "The Great Albums." Over the years Pere Ubu has released a stream of uncompromising, highly original albums, the latest being *Pennsylvania* (1998). As a complement to his work with Pere Ubu, Mr Thomas explores implausible creative configurations and seemingly arbitrary production methods. *The Sound of the Sand* (1981), configured around English folk-rock guitarist Richard Thompson, has been followed by a series of eclectic, unpredictable and ambitious releases, the latest being *Surf's Up!* by David Thomas and two pale boys. A duet with Scottish singer Jackie Leven called UBUDOLL and a one man show called "Surf's Up In Bay City" are other recent projects. Recognizing that a fundamental theme of Mr Thomas' work is the gestalt of culture, geography and sound, the Department of Cultural Geography at Clark University commissioned a lecture, "The Geography of Sound In The Magnetic Age," in 1996, delivered, as well, at the Gerrit Rietveld Akademie, Amsterdam, later that year and in other venues since.

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Linda Thompson (singer)

Linda Thompson is a legendary British singer, and partner to former husband Richard Thompson in a series of essential recordings from the 70s & early 80s. "Her voice, with its grave, lucid poise and its disarming candor, conveyed a timelessness, a sense of ancient and modern, that allowed Richard and their musicians to create something that tied together many strands of British music, much as The Band had done with American vernacular music a few years earlier" (Richard Williams, "The Linda Thompson History"). She was named Best Female Singer of the Year in 1982 by both Rolling Stone and Time Magazine. Her first solo album resulted in an appearance at The Grammys. Last year she appeared in the Royal National Theatre production of Tony Harrison's "The Mysteries." A new album is nearing completion.

Jack Kidney (sax, harmonica)

Jack Kidney has been playing harmonica, sax, keyboards, guitar and percussion in 15-60-75, a musical group from Kent, Ohio, since 1973. His harmonica playing is special: passionate, fluent and original.

Robert Kidney (singer)

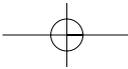
Robert, 53 years old, founded 15-60-75 (The Numbers Band) 31 years ago in Kent, Ohio. 15-60-75 is lyric-based experimental music with eclectic influences. (Their 1975 album, Jimmy Bell's Still In Town, has recently been re-released by Glitterhouse to rave reviews.) Other than working with David Thomas on the Mirror Man project, Robert has also done work with Anton Fier and the Golden Palominos. URL: <http://www.numbersband.com>

Jackie Leven (singer)

Jackie Leven is a remarkable songwriter, a natural guitarist, but, above all, a singer of rare beauty and passion. It's been said that Jackie "sees the extraordinary dreams of ordinary people." His childhood and teenage years were spent in the dying coalfields of Fife in Scotland in the 50s and 60s - a time when he had to artfully reconcile his emerging musicality, and his enduring love of American and Russian poetry, with the need to be "hard." He left Scotland aged eighteen to become a wanderer with a guitar, living in Berlin, Madrid, the west of Ireland, and Dorset. The result of such itinerant brooding was five albums by Doll By Doll, a rock band of uncompromising live intensity that made surprisingly elegant records in the late 70s and early 80s. Following serious illness Jackie returned to recording in the 90s with a series of highly acclaimed solo albums. His 19th album all told, Creatures of Light & Darkness, is scheduled for release July 2 on Cooking Vinyl.

Daved Hild (singer)

Born 49 years ago in the pre-Disney world of Central Florida, Daved, while studying art restoration and art history at the Boston Museum School, founded the legendary punk / dada band, The Girls, in the late seventies. David Thomas produced their seven inch vinyl masterpiece, Jeffrey I Hear U, for his Hearpen label. Mr. Hild has collaborated as a singer, lyricist, accordionist and drummer with David Thomas and the Wooden Birds, Ralph Carney, Kramer, Marc Ribot, Garo Yellin and played with musicians from Sonic Youth, Pere Ubu, Tin Huey, Beck, Sean Lennon, Tom Waits, Shockabilly, Mission of Burma, Come, Combustible Edison and Curlew. Mr. Hild hopes to soon complete the mix of a long overdue studio project with Pale Boy Keith Moliné and former Bongwater guitarist Randy Hudson called RUMBAJAZZSTUNORGAN. Some of his other projects are currently available on the Shimmy Disc / Knitworks record label in the US.



Bob Holman (radio voice)

Bob Holman is a poet who has written six books (most recently, "The Collect Call of the Wild," published by Holt), edited three anthologies, and created poetry television for the Public Broadcasting System, "The United States of Poetry." His first CD, *In With The Out Crowd* (Mouth Almighty/Mercury), was produced by needle-drop wizard Hal Willner. Backed by Chris Spedding, Wayne Kramer, and Bobby Neuwirth, the album is shot through with urgent humor and what can only be called, "poetry." Lou Reed says it is "an astonishing achievement." Robert Creeley has proclaimed it "A hit!" And David Thomas allows, "Exceedingly groovy."
URL: <http://www.bobholman.com>

Andy Diagram (trumpet)

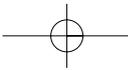
Andy Diagram has been a unique voice on the trumpet for more than 18 years. He developed his own style over that time in a variety of very different projects. Creating large soundscapes of brass with the use of electronics, looping his trumpet in multiple echo machines, and with the ingenious use of harmonizers he builds not just luscious washes of sound but also pulsating and infectious rhythms. Spending much of the 1980s in Manchester, he recorded and toured with a range of bands on the rock, pop and jazz scenes, from Diagram Brothers and Dislocation Dance to James. Moving to London in 1992 he became a founder member of The Honkies which stormed the London improvised music scene of the early 90s. He now records and tours the world with his own, much acclaimed band The Spaceheads, where his unique sound and melodic sense are complimented by the emotive rhythms of drummer Richard Harrison. He has also been recording and touring with David Thomas as a regular member of the 2 Pale Boys for the last five years. URL: <http://www.spaceheads.demon.co.uk>.

Keith Moliné (guitar)

Keith Moliné refracts shivery vibrato guitar through synthesizer and sampler technology to create beguiling sonic vistas punctuated by off-kilter effects and random interjections. This approach results from a careful cross-pollination of high-art avant-garde and low-art prog. In addition to six years as a Pale Boy, he has performed in the group Infidel, recorded solo as Mesmerist, and is currently playing electric violin with kosmische absurdists They Came From The Stars I Saw Them.

Chris Cutler (percussion, electronics)

At the start of the seventies, he co-founded The Ottawa Music Co. with Dave Stewart, a 22 piece rock composer's orchestra, and eventually joined British experimental group Henry Cow, with whom he toured, recorded and worked in dance and theatre projects over the next eight years. He went on to co-found a series of mixed national groups: Art Bears, News from Babel, Cassiber, The (ec) Nudes, P53 and The Science Group and was a permanent member of American bands Pere Ubu, Hail and The Wooden Birds. Apart from a succession of special projects he works regularly with Jon Rose, Fred Frith, Zeena Parkins, David Thomas, Iancu Dumitrescu, Peter Blegvad and Stevan Tickmayer - and performs widely as a soloist with his extended electric kit. He has produced works for radio, galleries, theatre and dance. He also founded and runs the independent label and distribution service ReR/Recommended, edits the New Music magazine Unfiled and is author of the theoretical book *File Under Popular* - as well as numerous articles and papers published in 14 languages. He lectures intermittently on theoretical and music related topics and has appeared on over 130 recordings. URL: <http://www.ccutler.com>



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Dids (sound mixer)

Dids is a musician / sound artist of wide experience. Originally a percussionist in the Manchester indie scene of the 80s with Ludus, among others, he recorded, wrote & toured with Velvet Underground legends Nico and John Cale. He was one of the pioneers of electronic rhythm in the UK and is a composer for contemporary dance and theatre. He regularly performs and records under the alias Gagarin, creating atmospheric sound and beatscapes and is an active community musician and animateur.

Danny Grace (scenographer / technical director)

Designer / Professor of Theatre at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, Danny Grace has designed over 100 productions for the stage. He holds an MFA in Design from Case Western Reserve University. His bands, 'The Rockin' Guys and Frontier Circus, record for Ironic Records.

