

Primitive Calculators

Formed: 1978

Style: Electronic

Original line-up: Stuart Grant (guitar, vocals), Denise Rosenberg (keyboards), David Light (bass, keyboards) Frank Lovece (drum machine, vocals)

Alongside Ollie Olsen's band Whirlywird, Primitive Calculators were leading lights of the so-called Melbourne's 'Little Band' movement of the late 1970's. The 'Little Bands' concept was based around the premise that anyone could get up on stage and perform for 15 minutes. As a consequence, many small-time bands like Morpions, Too Fat to Fit Through the Door, Thrush and the Cunts, Use No Hooks, The Alan Bamford Musical Experience and The J.P. Satre Band played a handful of shows to a small but enthusiastic following.

Primitive Calculators were the most musically forthright of the bunch. As writer Clinton Walker put it, Primitive Calculators delivered a raw, savage, kinetic sound that could only be compared with the New York No Wave (which encompassed the likes of Teenage Jesus and the Jerks and James Chance and the Contortions). The band built up a strong inner-city following and issued one independent single in 1979, 'Do That Dance' / 'I Can't Stop It'. At the end of 1980 Primitive Calculators left for the UK and broke up soon after.

Band Members correction: The Calculators had their final performance at the Seaview Hotel in early March 1980, the night before Denise left for Europe.

By 1983, Grant and Light had teamed up with Arnie (sic) Hanna (guitar, drums; ex-Whirlywird who was later replaced by Phil Nicholls) and Terry Dooley (vocals; ex-Teenbeat) as The Bum Steers. That band was known for its radical, improvised, distortion-heavy reworkings of such Australian rock classics as Russell Morris's 'The Real Thing' and Coloured Balls' 'GOD'. The band played regular gigs on the Melbourne inner-city circuit, and then contributed a version of 'Ol' Man River' to Au-go-go's Various Artists compilation album *Asleep at the Wheel* (1984). Stuart and Denise Grant also worked as cocktail jazz duo Mr. Bum and Miss Ruby.

Band Members correction: Mr. Bum and Ruby were Stuart and Ruby Ponsford.

In early 1986, Primitive Calculators reassembled to record two tracks with producer/musical director Ollie Olsen, for the soundtrack to Richard Lowenstein's feature film *Dogs in Space*. Set in the post-punk wasteland of inner-city Melbourne, the film centred around the exploits of fictitious band Dogs in Space on the 'Little Bands' scene. Stuart Grant (vocal, guitar, drum machine), Denise Grant (keyboards), David Light (bass), Terry Dooley (backing vocals) and Marie Hoy (backing vocals) recorded the tracks 'Pumping Ugly Muscle' and 'Do the Icepick'. The band appeared in the film performing 'Pumping Ugly Muscle'; that track was also issued on the *Dogs in Space* soundtrack album (on Chase) and the single 'Pumping Ugly

Muscle'/'Do the Icepick' (August 1987). As a result of their involvement in the film, the band members issued the album *Primitive Calculators*, which had been culled from a live performance recorded in 1979. The album came with a bonus 7-inch re-pressing of the single 'Do That Dance' / 'I Can't Stop It' ←

Band Members correction: Only one track, "Pumping Ugly Muscle" was recorded for the Dogs in Space record. The self-titled album was released in the early 1980's, but due to lack of demand, lay under Alan B. bed for many years. There were no repressings of the single. These were copies, which were unsold and kept for years by Dave. It was then decided to give them away with the album.

Album: Primitive Calculators (No label, 1987)