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Apr

:: Black & White Lovers

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Now a little pause on me going through my 12" records. I'll go back to that next week, probably on Monday. Today I want to discover, get to know more about Black & White Lovers, whose one and only release, a 7", released in 1986, is one that I would love to have, to own one day.

With luck, I think I'll be able to get a copy sometime. In the meantime I wonder who they were. They seem quite mysterious, don't they? That strange black and white cover art work. What is it? I find that the always recommended blog From a Northern Place had posted the sleeves back in 2015. It seems the cover art is actually a portrait of Charles Aznavour done by a Steven Brady.

Charles Aznavour, born Shahnour Vaghinag Aznavourian, is a French, later naturalised Armenian, singer, songwriter, actor, public activist and diplomat. Aznavour is known for his unique tenor voice: clear and ringing in its upper reaches, with gravelly and profound low notes. He has written over 1300 songs and recorded over 1,400, sung in eight languages and sold more than 180 million records.

On that back cover I can also see a photo of the band, playing live perhaps, or rehearsing, taken by Norman Collins. The tracks are listed, not as A or B, but 1 and 2. The first song being "Best Years of Our Lives" and the second "Boulevard of Broken Dreams". Both songs are credited to M. Tivnan. Both songs were recorded in May 1986 at Suite 16. The record was produced by the band.

The only other fact we gather from the record is that it was released by Guillotine Records, from Stockport (catalog GR 001). On Discogs other bands seem to be listed on this label, but I think it is a totally different Guillotine Records as the releases date from the 90s. Was the band from Stockport as well? Maybe it was a self-release?

Stockport is a large town in Greater Manchester, England, 7 miles (11 km) south-east of Manchester city centre, where the River Goyt and Tame merge to create the River Mersey. The town is the largest settlement in the metropolitan borough of the same name. Historically, most of the town was in Cheshire, but the area to the north of the Mersey was in Lancashire. Stockport in the 16th century was a small town entirely on the south bank of the Mersey, and known for the cultivation of hemp and manufacture of rope. In the 18th century the town had one of the first mechanised silk factories in the British Isles. However, Stockport's predominant industries of the 19th century were the cotton and allied industries. Stockport was also at the centre of the country's hatting industry, which by 1884 was exporting more than six million hats a year; the last hat works in Stockport closed in 1997.

Where next? To my surprise there are many videos on Youtube by Black and White Lovers. Yes, this time no ampersand, but an "and" between Black and White. First video I find is [one video](#) that even has Gary Lineker scoring some goals. On the little description it says that this version of "Best Years of Our Lives" was recorded at Spirit Studios in 1985. This said video was a rough edit and was never finished it seems.

This same song was to be re-recorded for the single. And I could find a [live video](#) of the band performing it at the International in Manchester on August 1986. How cool is that?

The Youtube account owner is a Martin Briars it seems. Was he part of the band? Could be. I'll drop him a message through Youtube. Will there be any luck? I doubt it, seems his last upload was 6 years ago.

There are more videos. I see the vocalist with some maracas playing live the song "[Remember](#)". It sounds jangly and fantastic! On the little info it says the band formed in 1984 and disbanded in early 1987. They also had positive reviews on the NME and City Life magazines.

From that same gig, at Berlin in Manchester on the year 1985 there is also the song "[Carpmael](#)". On the info it tells a bit about the story of this particular song: *Despite the vagaries of the PA, which seems reasonable, you might be able to hear one or two of the words to this one - not because the words are particularly good.... the tune's crap.....it's a story. The story is of a man gifted with the ability to see into the future, and becomes rich and successful . He dreams he is paralysed in a hospital.*

The band would play the same venue in December 1985. From that time we find a video of them performing the song "[Nightingales](#)" at the soundcheck.

Next up is a video of the song "[Same People](#)" that was recorded at Spirit in 1985.

Then there are a lot of videos from the same gig as the first video I shared, from the International in Manchester 1986:

- [Stolen Kiss](#) (with an intro from Jimmy Saville)
- [Nightingales](#) (after Maurice Chevalier's "if a nightingale could sing like youuuuuou.....", or rather the Marx Brothers take on him in "Monkey Business", because of the supposedly "French" feel to it... !!)
- [Until You Come Along](#)
- [Remember](#) (walked straight into a dream, an 18-carat dream, remember, i remember, we were happy then..... things were different then!!!!)

I then decided to look for M. Tivnan. Who was he? I find a Myspace for an Anthony Tivnan from Stockport. That is a clue indeed. But he is no M. Tivnan, but an A. Tivnan. Probably the brother? But what about this [interview to Steve Murphy](#) from the band Gods Gift on the New Hormones blog? I see a mention of a Martin Tivnan!But at that time we were perhaps mid-20s and these kids were 15, 16 - we used to share gigs with this band called The Enigma - they were fantastic. I'm astonished that nothing ever became of them. The lad that played the guitar, sang, did all the songs, he was only 15 and he was brilliant. Martin Tivnan he was called. They were a good band.

What's even better is the comments section! I think Martin Tivnan actually comments and says: *I was the drummer in The Enigma, I remember sharing a few gigs with you back then, also doing the recordings for the album in Stockport. Also sharing your bands drum kit also Mike Joyce's from The Hoax. I've still got the "Unzipping the Abstract Album", reckon your track and ours were the best! I bought your single as well. Great to see this interview and cheers for giving us a mention, I didn't save anything from that era which is a pity. I do remember that you were quality on the guitar though.*

On the said record, Unzipping the Abstract, The Enigma contributes the punky song "Play With Fire".

And lastly, someone called Brendan Chesterton makes the connection I was hoping for:

After Jeff died I joined up with Martin Tivnan and the Enigma guys to form Black and White Lovers. You are spot on about Martin's talents, he was Noel Gallagher's equal or better 15 years before.

So there we go. We got two names now from Black & White Lovers, Martin Tivnan and Brendan Chesterton! And maybe a third with Martin Briars. Quite some detective work.

Who else remembers them? Did they leave any more unreleased songs? Whatever happened to them after Black & White Lovers? Would be great to find out more about them!

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Listen

[Black & White Lovers - Best Years of Our Lives](#)

Hi Roque,

I was the Bassist for the Enigma and also Black and White Lovers. Martin Tivnan is still writing great songs, but not playing them. Think I have a spare copy of Black and White Lovers single and can send it to you.



Kevin Brady

May 24th, 2017