

Sunday Independent

LIFE

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U2'S EVIL TWINs

**VIRGIN PRUNE GAVIN
FRIDAY ON BEING BONO'S
DOPPELGANGER**

GAYBO FINALLY COMES CLEAN ON THE TRUTH ABOUT PEE FLYNN'S INFAMOUS LATE LATE SHOW COCK-UP
BEAUTY FASHION FOOD AND DRINK STYLE IT'S A MAN'S WORLD YOUR GUIDE TO THE WEEK'S TV AND RADIO

They were Ireland's original punk band, angry and anarchic and wildly provocative, the shadow side of U2's nice-boy image. With the re-release of the Virgin Prunes back catalogue, **Gavin Friday** looks back fondly at the weirdness that seemed like a planned accident, and describes the radical music that broke all the rules

VIRGIN REBIRTH

Blame it on the Prods and the Plymouth Brethren

Blame it on the Christian Brothers and the GAA

Blame it on Georgie Best and the cider-drinking bootboys

Blame it on Sister Nora, my career-guidance officer at St Kevin's CBS
Blame it on Oscar Wilde and David Bowie
Blame it on the Northside and Cedarwood Road...

Take me back to '72, my coo-ca-choo'
from 'Caruso' by Gavin Friday

The year was 1972 when I, Fionan Martin Hanvey, first befriended Derek Karl Rowen and Paul David Hewson. We all lived on Cedarwood Road. We loved music, we had a similar surreal sense of humour, we liked painting, we had no time at all for football, we looked and dressed differently, we didn't want to be cowboys — we wanted to be Indians. We didn't fit in and we didn't want to. "Is there life on Mars?" asked David Bowie. We knew there was, so we went there, and all of a sudden Fionan became Gavin, Derek became Guggi, Paul became Bono... and the dull and grey streets of Ballymun became the glittering boulevards of Lypton Village.

From baptism to alcohol, in a land suffocatingly green. Hey! the myth is magic... Do you know what I mean?
from 'My 20th Century' by Gavin Friday

Music was always the driving force. For me it was religion, a godsend. And then in

1976/'77, punk rock spat in our faces and whispered in our ears, "U2 can be a Virgin Prune" ... and a terrible beauty was born.

The first actual performance of the Virgin Prunes took place in a Methodist hall in Sutton, Northside Dublin, in late 1977. Myself and Guggi on lead vocals and an incognito backing band: Adam, Edge, Larry and Dik — lambs dressed as mutton. At the time, I worked in a Dublin meatpackers'

slaughterhouse, so myself and Guggi dressed the band head to toe in the gauze usually used for covering meat for exportation. The backing band looked like four sides of beef playing bass, drums and guitars, awaiting delivery to Saudi Arabia. We played one song — a 15-minute slow-motion version of (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction*. After the gig, Dik left U2 and joined Virgin Prunes; this was closely followed by Guggi's brother

Strongman joining on bass, Dave-Id Busaras on narration and Pod on drums. Pod was replaced briefly by Haa-Lacka Bintii, then permanently by Mary d'Nellon.

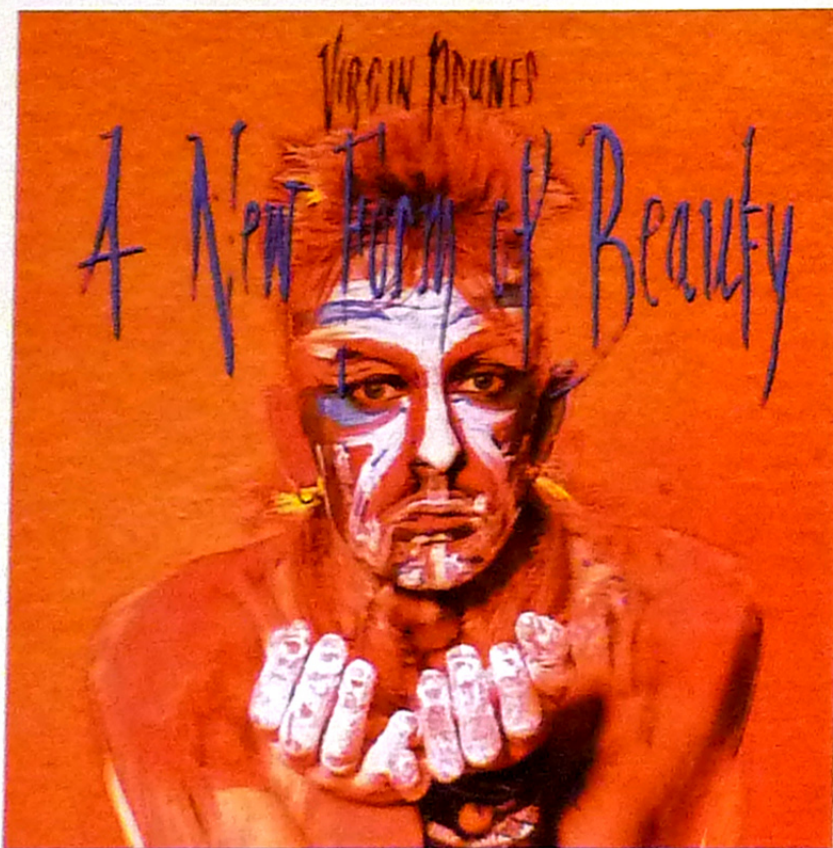
Ladies and gentleman, to whom it may concern: Virgin Prunes.

We hadn't a clue what we were doing but knew exactly — it was like a planned accident. We made it up as we went along. "We're so pretty, oh so pretty vacant, and we don't care," snarled Sex Pistol Johnny Rotten. We did care — we cared so much we were fearless, and, yes, anger was definitely an energy. The Ireland of the late Seventies was very different to the Ireland of today.

"I haven't fucked much with the past but I'll fuck plenty with the future," ranted the punk poet Patti Smith, and, man, did I take her seriously.

Should I talk the way you want me to talk, say the things the way you want to hear them? I know a lot of people like that... Why should I be like you? Be like you?
from 'Theme for Thought' by the Virgin Prunes

October 2004 sees the re-release of the Virgin Prunes back catalogue on Mute Records through EMI worldwide, most of the recordings released for the first time ever on CD. It's very difficult for me to be objective about the Virgin Prunes — they were my baby. I was their daddy-mommy Prune who in 1984/'85 put this beautiful angry child into a retirement home for the musically and artistically disturbed. And, now 20 years later, it reappears screaming at my hall door — dressed in black, a pig's head hanging from its groin, face painted white, vomit-dripping lips kissing me passionately on the mouth. The Prodigal Son in drag. Welcome home. Frankenstein! Come on! Come to Daddy! **B**



VIRGIN PRUNES

HÉRÉSIE

A NEW FORM OF BEAUTY *Opposite*

After we released two seven-inch EPs in 1980, Rough Trade Records approached us with the offer of recording an album. We instead came up with *A New Form of Beauty*, a seven-part multimedia project: a seven-inch single, *Sandpaper Lullaby*; a 10-inch EP, *Come to Daddy*; a 12-inch EP,

Beast; a live cassette, *Din Glorious*; a two-day exhibition/performance/installation at the Douglas Hyde Gallery; a book; and a film. Ambitious, to say the least. The book was never finished, and the film was never released. It documented the two-day Douglas Hyde exhibition.

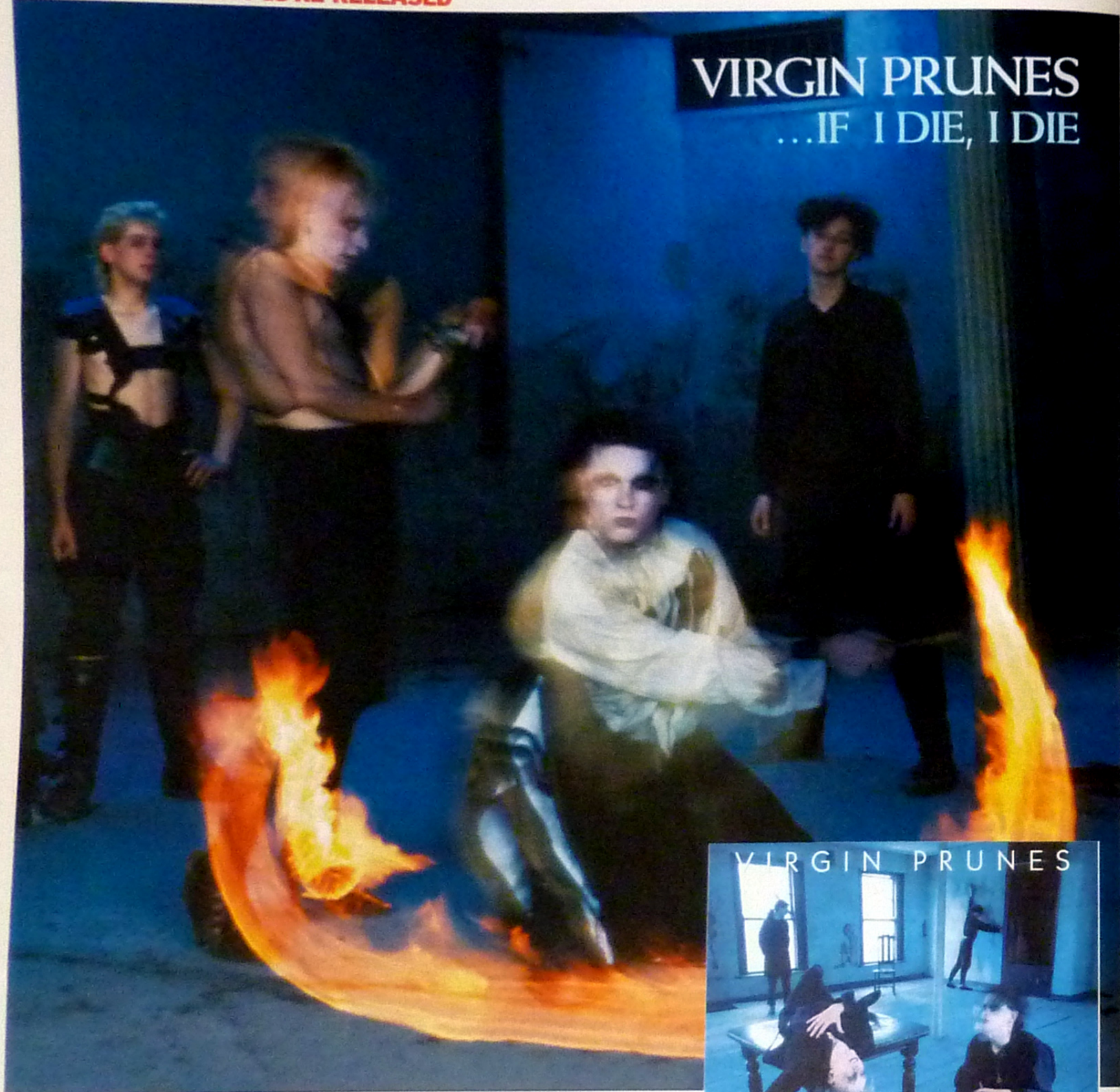
HERESIE *Above*

Originally released as a double 10-inch boxed set in a limited edition of 75,000, the 'studio' album was a totally improvised recording, while the 'live' album was extracts from the band's first live performance in Paris, France. Using the themes of 'insanity' and

'religion', the concept was to push ourselves to the edge of... well, of insanity. All the music was written during the day and recorded during the night, a process that saw the band go without sleep for three days.

A TERRIBLE BEAUTY IS RE-RELEASED

VIRGIN PRUNES ...IF I DIE, I DIE



...IF I DIE, I DIE Above

In 1982, the band decided to employ a producer, Colin Newman of Wire. This album, while less experimental and perverse than previous recordings, still showed the band's obtuse approach to instrumentation. ... *If I Die, I Die* saw

the band dabble in a dark post-punk sound alongside a more mystical Celtic feel and surreal pop. It became the band's first big-selling album.



Virgin Prunes



THE MOON LOOKED DOWN AND LAUGHED

OVER THE RAINBOW *Left*

A compilation of rarities from 1980-1984, *Over the Rainbow* includes all the band's early singles/EPs/12-inch mixes and album outtakes, most of which have never before seen the light of day. This album shows how varied and diverse

the band's musical approach was, from glam to industrial to punk to pop to Krautrock to the more experimental.

THE MOON LOOKED DOWN AND LAUGHED *Above*

Produced by David Ball of Soft Cell, this was the most lush and melodic of all the band's recordings, yet still quite twisted in essence. With the release of... *If I Die, I Die*, the band had toured Europe extensively, which opened them up to a

whole new world of musical influences. A radical, more musical, direction was planned. Despite the band's huge popularity in Europe, the band members started to pull in different directions. This one could be called the Divorce Album.