

Edgar Broughton live in Peckham October 7<sup>th</sup> 2011

A Benefit for the Mental Health Resistance Network  
Fighting the benefit cuts



Those of you who listened to John Peel on Radio One in the late 1960s and early 1970s will probably remember the Edgar Broughton Band. Three hairy rebels looking out from the cover of their first album *Wasa, Wasa*. I felt that the Edgar Broughton Band had a strong blues influence in their music. I felt there was a Howling Wolf influence in there. But they were very much doing their own thing. There was their anthem *Out Demons Out*, *Apache Dropout* linked the Shadows with Captain Beefheart.



Number 33 in the UK Singles Charts

There was their anti war song Young American Soldier. This was at a time when the Vietnam War was raging. One of their songs Hotel Room was released as a single and had the honour of becoming Tony Blackburn's record of the week on radio one. The cover of their second album Sing Brother Sing had a photograph of two white boys and a black boy standing together in what looked like a church doorway. I don't know if it was intended or not, but I often saw this symbol of racial harmony at a time when we were still harbouring phobias towards the people who had been coming to England from the Caribbean for the past couple of decades.



These were a few of the Edgar Broughton Bands moments. After the early 1970s their popularity faded, but the band carried on throughout the rest of the decade and into the 1980s, Sometimes they changed their name to the Broughtons. During the summer of 1990 I saw Edgar Broughton perform at the Cricketers in Kennington South London, (then a popular music venue.) Here Edgar was doing a solo set of acoustic songs. He was sharing a bill with John Fiddler from Medicine Head. (A band that were signed to John Peel's Dandelion label in the early 1970's.) John Otway and Kevin Coyne. I remember it being a most enjoyable gig. In Peckham like at the Cricketers gig Edgar Broughton was playing an acoustic set.

We will return to Edgar shortly. First however I will tell you about the gig. It took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2011. It has taken me a while to sit down and write this. But I haven't had much spare time for a while. However I wanted to write about the event and the cause it was raising funds for. So here I am sitting at my computer hammering away at the keys. The gig was a benefit to raise money for the Mental Health Resistance Network, a group connected to Mad Pride that is fighting the ATOS medicals and the benefit cuts. These things are causing extreme distress for many vulnerable people. We will be talking about this in depth shortly, first however we visit the gig. It took place on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October at the Montague Arms in Peckham. A venue down the road from Queens Road Peckham train station and not far from New Cross Gate. This being handy for me as I travel over from Hackney after a short bus ride I get the London Overground to New Cross Gate, in this cutting out some of the travelling that I normally would have to do to get to Peckham. The Montague Arms is sometimes known as the Monty. It is a friendly pub that sells nice food at a reasonable price. Sadly you can't get a cup of tea there, anyway mustn't grumble.

Mad Pride's regular MC Jason Why compared the gig with his usual enthusiasm. As well as the guests, there were a number of open mike spots; they were slotted in

between the guests. They included Razz and Jazzman John Clarke, two hard working performance poets who have been on the scene for many years. I can't remember the names of the other floor spots, but at the beginning of the evening there was a wonderful duo. One lady playing percussion, the other lady singing and playing guitar. At one point she was playing the guitar behind her back. This is a tradition that goes back to the early days of the blues and people like Charlie Patton. In the 1960s Jimi Hendrix brought the tradition into rock music. It is nice to see the tradition being carried on.

I was the first guest of the evening. I read some of my poems, played a bit of harmonica; I ended with a humble version of that well travelled old spiritual John the Revalator. The audience clapped along to the song. It is always nice when that happens. The second guest was guitarist and singer songwriter David Studdert. He was accompanied by a bongo player. I can't remember his name. This was the first time that I have seen Dave perform, I remember him singing a song about debt. A very topical issue these days. I also remember a song about being sniffed by police dogs. The next act was The Strange Agency. They had come up from Wales for the gig. I find it difficult describing this bands music. For me it was a mixture of psychedelic and punk with some topical lyrics. I felt there was a Captain Beefheart influence in there. They played an impressive set.

After this Edgar Broughton took the stage. Accompanying himself on an acoustic guitar he played a set of acoustic songs. Sometimes the songs had a pastoral feel to them. Lyrically Edgar is still on the ball. One song related the riots that took place last summer. Another song was written from the point of view of a relative in a care home. Very soulful indeed, I hope there will be a chance to hear more of Edgar Broughton in the future. The show ended with a psychedelic band called Paradise 9. Their line up included guitarist Tyrone Thomas who has played alongside Mark Perry in Alternative TV. He also has his own band called Olympic Clampdown. Another member of the band is folk singer and songwriter Jaki Windmill. Back in the day she was a regular performer at Bunjies Coffee House in Leicester Square in London's West End. She also did a number of gigs for Survivor's Poetry at this time. One strong visual aspect of the band was one of their guitarist's, I don't know his name, but he was a big guy, he had a bald head and a smile that went right across his face. When he came to the front of the stage he looked a little awesome. He looked like something out of Marvel Comics, a good guy from another galaxy. Unfortunately I had to leave after a couple of numbers to make that long journey back to Homerton. I had missed the last London Overground train to Dalston Junction. Hopefully I will catch this band again sometime in the future. Thank you to VJ Flickering Light for the light show, and a special thank you to Mr Dave Skull for organising the event, and thanks again to Mr Jason Why for being the MC.

Like I said earlier, this gig is a benefit for the Mental Health Resistance Network. This is a group that was set up in the autumn of 2010 to fight the insensitive benefit cuts, that are currently taking place. And to challenge the stigma that is being associated with benefit claimants at the moment. The Mental Health Resistance Network was set up in the autumn of 2010, and was launched that October with a demo at Speakers Corner in Hyde Park. Unfortunately the weather wasn't very good. It was cold and damp. But despite this there was quite a good crowd. We even got support from some teenagers who were in the park at time. People had made a puppet with David Cameron's face on one side and George Osborn's face one the other. The puppet was stuffed with sausages. Then it was hung, it was going to be drawn and quartered. But people knocked the stuffing out of it with walking sticks. Showing the anger that is felt towards this coalition government, and their plans to stop our benefits, and to put us through a lot of unnecessary distress. Since then the campaign has continued to fight back against the benefit cuts and the growing stigma

around people who are claiming benefits, raising funds through gigs.

People are being assessed by a company called ATTOS. In the assessments they are not interested in what your GP or Psychiatrist has to say about you. Judgment is made on this one interview. If you are lucky you will be put on Employment Support Allowance. This will excuse you from regularly looking for work. You have to convince the man at the job centre that you are still not fit for work. One helpful suggestion about the ATTOS medicals is to take someone with you. In this showing that you can't get there on your own. It is also important to show that you have both physical and mental problems. Having just poor mental health is not enough to satisfy the criteria. If you are unlucky you face the prospect of Job Seekers Allowance. This means regularly looking for work that will be hard to find in this time of high unemployment, when even the youth are having difficulty finding work. In this people will experience a lot of intimidation, and be put through a lot of pressure. Either way it will mean a drastic cut in benefits. I know people who have been to these medicals on their own, and scored no points because they made their own way there. Despite how difficult the journey might have been. One little bit of reassurance is that a lot of people who have had their benefits cut and appealed against the decision, have won their appeals. However the appeal process is long and stressful and can be too much for someone who is feeling vulnerable. Especially if that person doesn't have much support.

However we are receiving bad publicity from the newspapers. They are full of stories about benefit cheats and scroungers. As a result we are all seen in this same condemning light. Sadly there are some people who fiddle the benefit system. But most people who claim benefits claim them because they need to survive. We are not lazy we are not scroungers. I left school at the age of 15 and feel I have worked hard in the past. I am sure that there are many other people currently on benefits who have worked hard too. But this bad publicity from the media is in danger of causing disability hate crime. We are facing the double blow of having our support services cut and having our benefits cut. Through this being plunged into a world of poverty. Distressingly the effects of these cuts have already caused a number of suicides. Sadly we seem to be mostly on our own in fighting back.

With the great concern that is being shown towards the cutbacks that are being made to the health services. Which is indeed a very worrying situation. However it is a shame that the mental health services can't be included in this concern. Taking away services from vulnerable people is indeed a terrible situation. Unfortunately we have received very little support from National Mind, and the well known group SANE (Schizophrenia A National Emergency) have shown us no support. Towards the end of last year SANE'S main mouthpiece Marjory Wallace spoke out against the insensitive comments, that Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson had made about suicide. It is sad that she can't see that a lot of suicides are being caused, by the terrible affects that these benefit cuts are having on people. But we must fight on, we must keep going. When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high, and don't be afraid of the dark.

If anybody is interested in getting involved with the campaign, taking part in a benefit gig, or finding out more about the issues involved. Here are some contact address.

For the Mental Health Resistance Network contact Mad Pride at [www.madpride.org](http://www.madpride.org) phone 077 577 15035

Disabled People Against Cuts  
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Peace and Love  
Frank Bangay  
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Edgar Broughton Friars Aylesbury 2009