

(Fred Negro on why the Ballroom was really shut down) "My band I Spit on your Gravy had been packing the Prince of Wales on a weekly basis. We were breaking house records as well as everything else (we set fire to the curtains one night). We'd play the George too of course. Unfortunately, a show that evolved into a small dick competition went horribly sideways when representatives of the Liquor Licensing Commission walked in. The show was stopped, The George lost its license, and I never got my prize - the coveted 'Golden Ruler'."

(Fred Negro on the small dick competition) The 'small dick competition'... I was going around with a ruler measuring and saying "too big, get off" and all the punk chics were up the front laughing and gawking. It got a big headline in page 3 of the Herald Sun 'Bands act Lewd and Depraved', and the whole article was how I organised a small penis competition and how the George could lose their license. We were meant to play at the St Kilda Festival and go on just before Hunters & Collectors on the main beach stage and the Council cancelled us at the last minute. Me and Pog were walking down Fitzroy Street and a cop came up and told us if they saw our band walking down the street, they could arrest us because we were banned from the festival!

(Fred Negro on Bananas) "Bananas was a dodgy place. Rose Tattoo (the Tats) were playing with the Tony Katz Band. The joint was full but halfway through the Tats a bunch of coppers walked through and spoke to management at the bar. The next thing they took down all the TVs and video players (remember them?) and gave them to the cops who took them away. The Editions used to do a Wednesday residency, so we were quite used to the local law leaving with a few slabs or cases of wine."

(Fred Negro on the Regal Room) "The first night was with a band called The Boot Boys who did a Hardcore Punk version of 'Skippy the Bush Kangaroo'. I think they were all Skinheads. We opened with a faithful rendition of 'Yummy, Yummy, Yummy, I Got Love in My Tummy' which we'd do to annoy the fuck out of our Punk audience. For some reason not many people came, and it only lasted a few months. 3PBS, the Indy radio station, took over the room and we played empty rooms elsewhere."

(Fred Negro on the Thursday Crawl) "From 1984 on every Thursday night there would be 3 bands on for free in the Prince Band Room. If a band wasn't any good, we'd wander up to the Ballroom. Inevitably the street would be full of punters walking the other way and the conversation would be something like, "The band is shit. What's on at the Prince?" or vice versa. And "Got 20 cents?" - The pots and the Prince were only \$1 and not much more at the George."

(Fred Negro on changing the band's name) "After the 'small dick competition' I Spit on Your Gravy could not get a gig in Melbourne. Ross was afraid of losing his license. So, we played the Thursday Crawl under various names including Ian Rilen's Toilet, the Thursday Crawlers, Here Come the Leather Nuns (one with a bucket of chips for me), Stay Neat, I Am Your Head, Everything You Know Is Wrong and a few more I don't remember. Moronic Vice Squad representatives carefully disguised in 'Choose Life' t-shirts and sporting rubber Mohawks with the typical copper moustaches were 'infiltrating' our audience. We invented the 'spot the undercover Vice Squad member' game. It was popular with the crowd but didn't win us any friends with the Victorian Police Force."

(Fred Negro on the Gong Show) "We started doing the 'Gong Show' at The Venue which we'd started at Macy's in South Yarra, but it had gotten too big. The first night we put it on the Gravy's were the panel of judges. Brian Mannix was in the audience, a total dick. He was throwing coins at our faces. I had a big bag of props out the back included motorcycle helmets so we put them on and the coins bounced off our 3 bounces. The bouncers loved Brian Mannix for some unfathomable reason and did nothing.

The Gong Show always had a really good band on first: The Corpse Grinders, The Johnnys, Painters and Dockers, The Gravy's or a touring band doing a Monday gig. It was \$1.92 - \$3.92 to get in and it was always packed. The actual Gong Show was the most ridiculous show ever put on a stage. We should have been paying people to come in. It was rubbish.

There was the human vacuum cleaner. A bloke would stick a plug in his arse, pick him up by the feet, they'd play the sound of a vacuum cleaner, and he'd be pushed around and gobbling up a trail of Twisties he'd put on the stage. (OK that was me.) A favourite act was a guy with a fish tied to his cock who would sing the theme to popular TV shows such as The Love Boat. (OK that was me too.) Other times a bloke would say "This was my impression of Fred Astaire" and stare at the audience until he was Gonged. (OK that was me too.) Sometimes a dozen guys would get up and form the MuckMuck Tabernacle Choir and sing "Muck, muck, muck, muck" to the tune of something classical interrupted by the occasional "Can I have a rubber biscuit?" It was surreal. (I wasn't in this act.)

The Salada Sisters made regular appearances with a variety of acts including the famous 'Dying Blowfly' which always got a standing ovation. Robby Rocket came out with a piano accordion wearing roller skates and his Residents eyeball mask and played 'Pop Goes the Weasel' and tap danced till he fell over. That was probably the height of the artistic quality of the Gong Show. Chad Morgan appeared once. He stood on the side of stage and said "For fuck's sake." between every act. He was still drinking back then. If things got dull Paul Elliot would put a TV or something on stage and blow it up. It was dangerous, the whole show was dangerous, and it was probably criminal, but it was amusing."

(Fred Negro on his handbills) "I'd been doing handbills and posters for Joe Gaultieri who ran The Venue. Ross McVean started me doing the Prince of Wales posters too and he'd suggest something gross for each week's poster. I guess that's where the bad taste thing started. He'd suggest something disgusting and I took it from there. The poster that got me into the most trouble was when Bob Hawke's kid was caught with drugs. I did a Prince poster of Bob Hawk outside the St Kilda Caf' trying to sell smack in front of sign that said 'Soft drugs' instead of 'Soft drinks'. St Kilda Caf wanted to sue Ross MacVean. The Caf had at this time been drilling holes through their spoons because the junkies who scored there kept stealing them to fix up. Asking for a 'burger with the lot' meant something else. One night I asked for one and they wanted to charge me \$50! "Fifty bux for a burger? This ain't Maxine's!"

(Fred Negro on police harassment) I had my own versions of the popular shirts 'Fuck Art Let's Dance' and 'Choose Life' – they were 'Fuck Art let's Drink' and 'Choose Death' and 'Choose Beer'. One day I was wearing the 'Fuck Art let's Drink' shirt and the police took offence to the 'Fuck' part. Suddenly a police car pulled up very quickly and the officer said "Fred Negro we are taking that shirt it's offensive" and I got a summons to go to court and had to walk home without a t-shirt. It cost me \$200..."

"The band (I Spit on your Gravy) later discovered that private investigators had been hired by the St Kilda council to spy on us and document our movements. They were harassing band members and even locking us up for being drunk in public. I was walking down Fitzroy Street, with POG and I spat on the ground and suddenly 7 cops jumped out of nowhere and harassed me... that's when I wrote the song 'Harassment'... The cops just walked into my house once... the front door was open... and they saw what I was drawing and said "we could arrest you for that" (I was drawing cocks with top hats and canes for a theatre review for Melbourne Uni...

(Fred Negro on the Esplanade Hotel) "I moved from Richmond to St Kilda in 1975. The flat was on the corner of Robe Street and the Upper Esplanade. (It used to be a hotel too!) Anyway, that night, I wandered down to my local for the first time. As I approached, I noticed an ambulance parked on the footpath. Instead of a sign 'Ambulance' it had 'Dead Livers' in the same writing. Normally I never went into pubs (sic) but curiosity killed the liver and I summoned up my courage and entered the Esplanade Hotel for the first time.

It was love at first pot. I knew as soon as I walked in, I was never going to leave. Outlaw Country Rock band, the Dead Livers were on stage singing songs about St Kilda and Warnambool. The audience comprised drug-fucked and drunk tattooed bikies, transvestites and gays with flowers in their hair, blokes named 'Lucky' without arms or limbs (who were usually good pool players) and the typical St Kilda tourists. I couldn't bring myself to tell the young tourists from the suburbs that the sweet honey they were dancing with had one more appendage than they were expecting. Everyone was having a good time.

Not long after I joined The Editions I bumped into Marty Atchison, singer of the Dead Livers, in the Espy toilets. I asked him if we could cover their song 'Holy Mary' - a great song about dropping acid in Warnambool. His response was to give me advice on urination and excretion, "Don't force it son." We became great mates despite the fact that he barracked for Hawthorn (luckily most of the band barracked for the Pies).

The only other entertainment at the Espy in this era was various cover bands and the legendary Ted and Grace. Ted was 80-something and Grace was 20-something and neither of them could speak English. Ted played a Hammond organ with a drum machine and Grace, who was gorgeous, sang. On Sunday they'd sing songs like Stevie Wonder's 'I Just Called To Say I Luff You' to an appreciative audience of Punks, Bikies, Trannies and Families who'd come for the 'Famous Sunday \$5 Smorgasbord - all you can eat'. A lot of families would walk in and turn around and leave when they saw the clientele - especially the bloke called 'Lucky' with no head, just a hook out of his neck."

(Fred Negro on the Gravy Mansion) "We'd go down to the Espy and we'd come back and there were still people partying in your lounge room...sometimes for days. No wonder the cops just walked in. Me and my Girlfriend at the time had split up and so there was Pig and Scotty in one building and me and Pog in the other...it was \$100 a month and we still struggled to pay the rent. We had 5 bedrooms in each house as well as balconies. Later the owner came and said "I couldn't be bothered coming to collect the rent anymore do you want to buy it for \$20,000?"...But we had no money...today it is worth \$1.5 million!"

(Fred Negro on a gig that went wrong) "We were the first band on at the Prince on one of the Thursday crawls (under an alias band name) and we decided to swap instruments because we thought no-one would show up... but 200 people showed up and so we just improvised. I was on guitar, Sausage was on drums, Scotty was on Guitar, Pig was singing, and Dave Dog was on Saxophone and we sang A! G! because they were the only notes I could play on the guitar. It went swimmingly until KYM the KRAZY KLOWN set the curtains on fire with his fire breathing. I said to the crowd "what the fuck are you doing here? You never see the first band on a Thursday crawl... go back to the piano bar." Ross (McVean) docked our pay that night...we had to pay for the curtains."

(Paul Elliott on managing the Gravy's) "I enjoyed my stint as the Gravy's Manager until my speed habit got the best of me and depression took the upper hand. They were Australia's most entertaining combo for a while. 'The Gonk' is one of the most bonkers songs ever written. I Spit on your Gravy was Australia's Punk Beatles. Each member had their own distinctive style that contributed to the overall sound and look. Plus, there was the secret weapon, 'Kym the Krazy fucked up fire eating clown'. At their peak they were unstoppable! If only we'd toured the world and I didn't allow the band to be ripped off by a predatory Producer."