



Pic by Adrian Boot

TERRY and NICKY find the one about two old men in deckchairs hilarious

The easy life

Mark Cooper relaxes with FUN BOY THREE

VICTOR LOWNDES used to run the English section of the Playboy Empire. Recently he was made redundant. He doesn't seem to be suffering.

Victor retains possession of his favoured toy, a country mansion that dominates the countryside near Tring in Hertfordshire.

'Stocks' consists of innumerable rooms with innumerable paintings, a room full of space invaders, another with a private bar. There's a tennis court and a squash court, well-stocked stables containing horses for fun and a horse or two for the hunt that Victor loves.

Victor and his wife are kind hosts, even if they have to be. In their hour of need they've taken to hiring out their house for conferences and the occasional film.

This goes some way to explaining the presence of the three scruffy rogues currently distributing themselves in and around Victor's jacuzzi. Neville and Lynval are enjoying the waters while Terry slumps by the towels, his face maintaining its usual glum clown's stare.

The Funboy Three are here to make the video that will accompany 'Summertime' on its various TV appearances. The three Funboys play the

parts of houseboys, slaves to the rich. The daughters of the house have taken a fancy to the three and are siding with the boys against their parents. Neville succeeds in winning the house from Daddy in a crap game.

Cut to Mummy and Daddy leaving the house, bags packed, cut to Funboys enjoying champagne and the daughters. A sweet little fancy and one not so far from the truth. The wonderful world of pop has brought them to the mansions of the rich and they are determined to enjoy themselves.

The Funboys have got away with it, an escape that has nothing to do with talent. This really amuses Terry Hall. He'd probably laugh if he wasn't worried he'd end up crying.

"I'm a disillusioned young boy. "I don't like fun at all," Terry explains, "I think it's disgusting. That's why we have fun onstage now, because I hate it so much. Since The Fun Boy Three started I've been seen smiling; I used to be miserable all the time in the Specials. I've left 'doom' behind for 'fun,' they're both ridiculous. My idea of fun isn't doing music at all, it's sitting at home in Coventry with my girlfriend, cat on my lap, watching something like 'Coronation Street.' My idea of work is being in a pop group — it's a job and a joke; it'd be funnier still if we

weren't successful, then we'd be real prats."

If Terry enjoys TV, Lynval's idea of a good time is making music and going out to a club and Neville's... well, Neville's is women.

The one thing that all three have definitely decided is not fun was being in the Specials. Terry's natural gloom has been dimmed to dark by the experience: "Some of the ideas with which the Specials began were great... in principle. But they were totally impractical. How can a group bring 'unity' in the whole world? The Specials went on a political campaign for two years to no avail. It's pathetic thinking you can change things because you can't."

The Funboy Three are the product of the sad crash of the Specials.

The Specials dreamt of bringing unity to the youth and ended up fighting amongst themselves. According to Terry, the world doesn't change: "Dinosaurs used to rule the world and hedgehogs didn't get a look in. Nothing's changed. We're three hedgehogs. When we did 'Lunatics' it was taking the piss out of ourselves, out of politics, the Specials and the charts. I haven't belief in anything except myself, my family, my girlfriend, Rick our manager, and Neville and Lynval. Nothing could separate us. Apart from that, I couldn't give a shit."

From the first, the FB3 were determined that their venture would avoid the pitfalls into which the Specials plunged: "We learnt that the only way you can enjoy what you're doing is to make sure that everything is equal and democratic and that things aren't being dominated by

one person." This is Neville talking, the man whose energy used to dominate the Specials' live performances.

Don't you miss performing, Neville?

"I went onstage with Ranking Roger to join the Clash in Birmingham and it was great... I love the Clash and I hadn't been on a stage for over a year. We will tour around Christmas time and by then we'll have something to offer visually and musically. I couldn't go through all that bullshit with the skinheads again. You'd get about 20 of them at each Specials performance, they didn't come to enjoy it, a lot of them came to give Lynval and me a hard time and the others for having us there." Neville shakes his head, as if trying to clear a bad memory.

The Specials' experience made all three Funboys uptight and cynical. The design of the Funboys may not have disposed of the cynicism but it has enabled the lads to relax: "The Specials was a big group in a uniform," explains Lynval, "There's only three of us. We don't want to be put in a uniform like a policeman and have to wear a suit. We wear what we want now and we're not trying to kill ourselves. The Funboy Three appeal to a lot more people than records made for punks or tees..."

To further broaden their appeal, the FB3 have imported Nicky Holland, once a Ravishing Beauty, to add a touch of classical class to their amateur inventiveness. Nicky is classically trained and it is her vocal and orchestral arrangements that dominate 'Summertime'.

Lynval meanwhile thinks the three of them are

overdue some praise:

"When we left the Specials we had nothing; all we had was the fact that our faces were known. I was the only one who could actually play an instrument — I had to tell the others if they were out of tune or tell them if something was no good. You've got to be extremely stupid or extremely brave to leave a group when they've just got a Number One single, especially when the majority of you can't even play!"

"We started with nothing, we were dead empty. We can't go any further back, we started from the very bottom. People don't give us credit for what we've achieved; we didn't try to be a disco group or a reggae group, we just got on with what we had and our own style."

If Lynval is proud of what the Funboys have achieved, Terry remains amused. After all, it's Terry who's the heart of the group. It's Terry's flat, deadpan voice that dominates the singing and Terry's lugubrious face that dominates the look. Terry is most amused when emphasising the Funboys' lack of skill and hinting at their lack of talent.

"I don't know how to play any instruments," he says indifferently. "And I don't really want to learn about things either. I did that at school and it was awful. All you need to know about an instrument is how to get a noise from it. That's why we started with drums. How far can you go with a drum? All you can do is hit it. I played a bit of piano on the album and I'd never played a piano in my life. Our philosophy is that whoever feels capable of doing something should just go ahead and do it. We just

make mood music, we just play whatever mood we're in."

Some might call them moody. The FB3 turned their moodiness and their lack of skill into their central talent, all with a stubborn, single-minded self-satisfaction that verges on the perverse. Terry goes out of his way to emphasise his lack of interest in pop records. Perversely, it's his lazy lack of interest and his refusal to be bullied, to get back on the scrapheap, that makes the FB3 and their percussive ramblings so successful.

"Personally," says Terry, looking as mournful as possible, "I'm sick to death of music. I'm not saying rock and roll is dead because it's not, it just goes on and on. That's why I concentrate on the visuals. To me pop groups are 99 percent the visuals and one percent the music. I've always been more interested in groups that look more interesting than they sound."

The Funboy Three are designed as a parody of a pop group. While groups like Bucks Fizz work terribly hard for their success, practice a lot and smile all the time, Terry frowns and is professionally lazy. He has had the bare-faced nerve to ask the public to reward him for being sullen, for singing flatly and for banging a Tunisian drum or two and it's worked!

Terry Hall likes to laugh at everything. It would be hard to say whether he finds life more depressing than funny or more funny than depressing.

Only a cynic would have placed Terry Hall in a group called The Fun Boy Three.