



BMX Bandits

15 Big Ones

November 27, 2026

LP / CD



With 15 Big Ones we are celebrating 40 years of BMX Bandits. It is a greatest hits of a sort but with a twist. The collection features their most successful single releases over the years but also tracks that should have been singles but weren't. I Wanna Fall In Love, And It's You and Love Me Til My Heart Stops are among their most beloved tracks but were somehow missed when it came to choosing the singles from albums. I Wanna Fall in Love could have been their best chance at a proper hit but the label just couldn't hear that in it. So in a way the collection is partly about presenting what should have and could have been.

„I started BMX Bandits in 1985 with my friend Sean Dickson (A.K.A. Hifi Sean). The group I had before, The Pretty Flowers, had suddenly wilted and died when Frances McKee, who had been my main inspiration for starting the group, announced she was starting a new group with her new boyfriend Eugene Kelly. That group became The Vaselines. I had some song ideas left over but it felt like no one to do them with. Sean had recently started The Soup Dragons and they were already getting a lot more positive interest than any of the music projects any of us had had up to that point and my other main musical friend Norman Blake had decided to take a break from bands and all that nonsense for a little while. Sean surprised me by saying he would be up for helping me with a new band project and that day we decided on the name BMX Bandits, it made us laugh a lot and we liked that it seemed anti-cool. An added bonus for me was when Brian Wilson started The Beach Boys surfing was the big youth trend but their leader didn't surf. The big youth trend when we started was BMX bikes but I couldn't cycle.

We decided to make a demo of 4 songs with Jim McCulloch, who we had met while busking in Glasgow, and his friend Billy Wood. Billy didn't have a lot of musical talent but he was very good looking. I decided that I would give copies of our new cassette to 4 people who had influenced us and so I sent copies to Jonathan Richman, Daniel Treacy of the Television Personalities and Jowe Head ex of The Swell Maps. I didn't know Stephen Pastel but I would see him in the audience at shows I went to in Glasgow and he was the fourth person I wanted to give our music to. And here is where good luck and timing worked for us. The next time I saw Stephen at a show, after he'd been given our tape, he informed me 1. That he really liked the tape. 2. He had just started a new record label, called 53rd & 3rd, with David Keegan of The Shop Assistants, and 3. They would like to release a single by BMX Bandits.

That was the beginning and I will always be grateful to Stephen and David for opening the gates to this magical kingdom of music, dreams and grand adventures. Sean had to leave the band after a year or so to concentrate on The Soup Dragons and then so did Jim. But others came along and joined BMX Bandits extended musical family, writing songs with me, playing shows, making records, perhaps disappearing for a while and returning or not years later. Norman changed his mind about taking a break from making music and initially joined BMX Bandits as our drummer and then after Sean's departure he became the other main songwriter with me. Then Teenage Fanclub happened and Norman couldn't be so involved and Francis became the other main songwriter with me. Francis Macdonald had been the original drummer in Teenage Fanclub but when he had to choose between which of the two bands he should stay with he choose BMX Bandits. He co-wrote many of the band's most loved songs, perhaps the greatest of these is I Wanna Fall in Love. Francis became Teenage Fanclub's drummer again.

Just before Norman moved onto concentrating on Teenage Fanclub I came up with the lyrics and melody for a new song that I thought could be a special one. I sang Serious Drugs down the phone to Norman around one o'clock in the morning. I imagined it should sound a bit like Chic meets George Harrison. I went up to his grandmother's house and he worked out the chords that would work best for my melody. We were in the studio the next day. We were meant to be tidying up after finishing the sessions for our album Star Wars but we wanted to record our new song. Norman recorded his guitars to a click track and then had to go to a Teenage Fanclub rehearsal. Most of the rest of the group didn't seem to be interested in the new song but Joe McAlinden, who had joined the band playing bass, violin, keys and saxophone stayed. Joe sang lead on the track and added a sax solo in the end section.

A few days later Alan McGee heard the song and wanted to sign us to Creation based on that track. We recorded Serious Drugs in 1991 but it wasn't released until 1993. The track made a big impact and was expected to be a hit. It wasn't a hit as BBC Radio decided they couldn't play it as its release coincided with their anti-drugs week. Oh dear. But after Serious Drugs a lot more people seemed to take us seriously.

Life Goes On, the album that featured Serious Drugs, on Creation was our biggest selling album but it wasn't my favourite. My favourite is My Chain from 2006, a musical chain of songs based on a love affair that didn't work out. It was our first album without Francis Macdonald, after his 18 years in the band. The writing on the album was compared to Brian Wilson meets Michel Legrand and to the English Dramatist Alan Bennett. With My Chain I also found two of my other main collaborators, David Scott and Stuart Kidd. Making the albums My Chain and Bee Stings felt like a golden age for BMX Bandits creativity. Foggy was one of a bunch of songs mostly written on a trip to Japan that David, Stuart, Rachel and I made in 2006. David and I were inspired by walking through beautiful shopping malls filled with Valentines and chocolates. It has an unusual structure, one section that acts as an intro and outro to the song and another chunk in the middle. Norman and I also used this unusual structure for Disco Girl some years earlier.

In 1996 the other big change was finding the first female Bandit, Rachel Mackenzie. Having Rachel in the band was inspirational, writing songs specifically for her voice and personality. After Rachel's departure my partner Chloe started playing and singing with the group and she ended up writing one of our most streamed songs, Love Me Till My Heart Stops, for our album BMX Bandits Forever. I wrote and recorded a track with Anton Newcombe of The Brian Jonestown Massacre for the album, while visiting Berlin. The song was written and recorded in one 3 hour session. Later my brother in pop Sean returned to the world of BMX Bandits to add some of his special sonic magic to the song for a single release version.

Then it was time for us to find a new home for our next album project, Dreamers on the Run. Dreamers on the Run, released by Tapete, was our most musically ambitious album so far and became our most acclaimed release. It's an album about outsiders trying to navigate life and love in a world that feels ever more complicated and unsympathetic.

And 40 years on BMX Bandits have remained musical outsiders. We never had the hits that Alan McGee predicted for us but as outsiders we've been able to grow as a musical entity doing things our own way and not trying to fit in with whatever else is going on.

Almost everything wonderful that has happened in my adult life has come out of me being in BMX Bandits, including my children and key relationships.

BMX Bandits is who I am."

Duglas T Stewart, August 2026.

Tracklisting

- A1 E102
- A2 Disco Girl
- A3 Come Clean
- A4 Serious Drugs
- A5 Little Hands
- A6 Gettin' Dirty
- A7 I Wanna Fall In Love
- A8 The Sailor's Song

- B1 Doorways
- B2 Foggy
- B3 And It's You
- B4 Love Me 'Til My Heart Stops
- B5 Razorblades & Honey (Hifi Sean Revision)
- B6 Spinning Through Time
- B7 Hop Skip Jump (For Your Love)

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