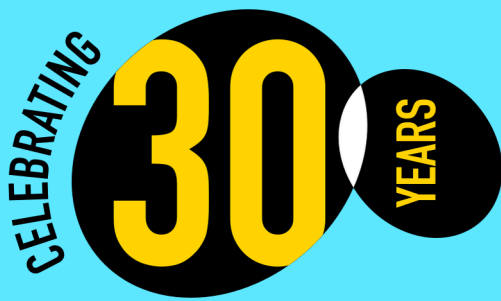




The day it all started with Rejects Revenge

On 20th November 1995, Rejects Revenge opened up the first ever Spot On Rural Touring season with a 6 night run of *Crumble* to communities in Ecclestone, Hurst Green, Gregson Lane, Glasson Dock, Parbold and Churchtown. The team went on to do several more tours of their shows and are fondly remembered as being one of the funniest and creative theatre companies around at the time. We were delighted to be able to make contact with the members of the company who kindly sent us this letter.

Dear Spot On.

Thank you so much for inviting the Rejects back after 30 years! It has given us the greatest pleasure to reminisce about our ex-GPO van touring days, to swap anecdotes and catch up. Ann still lives in Liverpool, teaching drama; Tim is an actor down in London, and David made the very sensible decision of becoming a successful businessman in Tokyo. Rejects Revenge as a theatre company came to a halt in 2008, but it remains a joyous time in all our lives – and rural touring played no small part in that.

As much as we all enjoyed playing theatres, there was never anything quite like invading a place that the local community looked on as their own and transforming it for one or two nights into a completely different world. We would meet and talk to the people responsible for organising the performances - an increasingly rare thing in professional theatres. Then, rather than the audience having to rush off to catch trains, we normally got the chance to meet and chat with them after the shows.



And then there were the sandwiches. We assume that an edict was sent out from HQ to ensure that the travelling players were well catered for, because on many

On occasions, we were met either with cling-filmed food for later or a clipboard taking our orders for a 'light lunch or tea' once we had set up. Quite often early

audience members were met by the sight of 3 actors lying on the floor-cloth struggling to warm up under the weight of said light tea, and our technician climbing ladders balancing a plate full of pork pies. On at least one

occasion we failed to trust this arrangement and treated ourselves to a slap-up Chinese meal before we arrived to set up at 2pm. Obviously

Obviously on this occasion we were met at the venue by the best stocked trestle tables of the tour, groaning under the weight of 'a little something to see us through the afternoon'. It would have been impolite to spurn such generosity, but suffice it to say the show was one of the slowest we've ever performed.

What started in Lancashire had a profound effect on the way that the company created and performed our shows. We had always devised using physical theatre techniques rather than relying on props and costumes, often using next to no set and a variety of hats to denote character changes. That seemed to suit rural touring very well. Once we had worked on transforming a non-theatre space using a travelling lighting rig and a floor-cloth, we found we could perform shows anywhere. Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, Northamptonshire, the South West and Scotland all had variations on the rural touring circuit, and over the years we played them all. I believe we still hold the record for the biggest audience in a particular village hall in Sutherland, NW Scotland, when more audience came to shelter in front of our show during a thunderstorm than technically lived in the village itself.

Rural touring wasn't without its mishaps. On one occasion Ann found herself making small talk and eating the majority of the fare laid out for the company, as Tim drove David to A&E. David's job was to spray the silver balls we held aloft in 'Crumble' to signify the majestic gates to Crumble Hall. In a moment of inspired cartoon idiocy, David pointed the spray at his own eye to check if there was any paint left in the can. There was. By 6pm the promoters were getting slightly edgy as to why only a third (slightly less, if you can picture Ann) of the cast were warming up for the 7pm production. Obviously she was way too embarrassed to let on why that was. But we made it, slightly later than most of the audience, who were aware only that one of the actors seemed to have very bad hay fever or had received some very bad news recently. I think we pulled it off in the end with no permanent ill-effects for David.

All the best,

The Rejects xxx

