Extract from 'Sit Down! Listen to This!' by Bill Sykes
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ERIC'S FACTORY - JULY 1978
LIVERPOOL - MANCHESTER EP

Anthony H Wilson: I suppose the main bit of the story for me was Roger phoning me up on my home phone in Charlesworth and saying: "Tony, you know we had a record label last year called Eric's that the 'Big In Japan' single was on?"

"Yes, Roger"

"Pete and I are going to re-start it, and we'd like you to be head of A&R."

This is something like July of '78, and I was incredibly flattered, great, you know?

So I say, "When do you want to do this?"

He says, "When can you get over to Liverpool?"

"Well I'm working, so Sunday" and it was a Sunday afternoon. Already in the phone conversation he said he knew I was managing The Durutti Column and he also knew I was friends with Rob Gretton and that we'd put Joy Division on at The Russell club. We talked about doing a Liverpool-Manchester collaboration. That evening, as fate would have it, I took LSD, I was round at Chris Joyce's house, who was the then drummer with The Durutti Column, and I began obsessing with this copy of Santana's Abraxas which was from the Far East, done in tissue paper and plastic sealed.

So the next day I drive over to Liverpool and already I'm thinking, I'm imagining how you could do this. Well if there's four bands, I'm beginning to imagine the Factory Sampler. So I got to Liverpool and went down to the basement office about 3 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon and sat down. I turned up that afternoon with Roger to put out a record that would get my group The Durutti Column signed and would get my mate Rob's group signed. Roger wasn't behind the wall, he knew that the secret to this release was having Joy Division, because already the buzz was

there for Joy Division.

So we had two Liverpool bands and two Manchester bands and after about an hour Roger says "We'll do a twelve inch single with two tracks on each side, one track each". I said "Let's do a double seven inch, a double seven inch EP, so there's eight tracks." It would be the first commercial double seven inch since The Beatles 'Magical Mystery Tour'. For whatever reason Roger had got stuck on the idea of a twelve inch single, and I'd got stuck on this double seven inch in this weird plastic packaging. So we argued for about half an hour, not bad temperedly, and I said "Listen I'll have to think about this."

Pete Fulwell: So I actually set up a meeting with Tony, we went over to Manchester. I said why don't we form, rather than what was becoming common, a city-based label, why don't we form a two city label? Why don't we do a label that is Liverpool and Manchester? A label that has got, as was then, Manchester's cool and Liverpool's pop sensibility. The reaction was Yeah! Tony had some ideas for packaging and stuff and we were gonna call it 'Eric's Factory', because the two gigs we were putting on were at Eric's and The Factory.

We did all the sums, spoke to Rough Trade, it was going to be Joy Division heading up the Manchester E.P. and Orchestral Manoeuvres heading up the Liverpool one. We discussed with Rough Trade how many Joy Division would sell, let's say 10 000, did the sums, got the spread sheets, went through all that at the meeting. Tony was buzzing about this new packaging he'd come across on a trip to Japan. So he was really up for the box that the stuff went in, and rightly, the way the thing was presented was really important, that was where his head was. Then it all went quiet.

Ken Testi: We'd done early records with Big In Japan and others and it was good, it was exciting stuff. But we decided a label from Liverpool might not be able to take on the London labels, or

one from Manchester might not achieve critical mass. But there was a greater chance of it working if there was a North-West label that had a foot in both Liverpool and Manchester. That label was to be 'Eric's Factory', the first release was going to be an EP with contributions from OMD and Joy Division. Pete produced a super business plan with it and it was that business plan Tony disappeared with to set up Factory Records. We never saw him again.

Anthony H Wilson: I remember getting back and by that point they'd built the M62. You used to have to go down the East Lancs Road but by the late 70's you had the M62 and I remember passing Huyton and the beginning of the motorway there and suddenly going 'Fuck it!' I wanna do a double seven inch, we'll do it ourselves. If Roger can bring a fucking record out we can bring a record out and having driven down the motorway west and being flattered at being asked to be Eric's new A&R man, I drove back thinking "Fuck it, we'll do it ourselves!" I went straight to Erasmus' flat (Alan Erasmus, then manager of The Durutti Column) in West Didsbury and said, "Alan I've had a nice meeting with Roger but they want to do a twelve inch single and I want to do a double seven, why don't we do it ourselves?"

So the origin of Factory records is a falling out over the format of this Manchester/Liverpool collaboration, who knows, if Roger hadn't rung me at home saying will you do it, I might have been just a TV presenter.

Pete Fulwell: The next thing that happened was it came out, and it was on Factory, though if you look at FAC2 they didn't take the 'Eric's Factory' logo off, so there are some collectors items there, I noticed that when I saw it, it still had the fucking logo on there.

Ken Testi: I'm told Wilson changed all the artwork. The artwork had 'Eric's Factory' on it. The only bit he forgot to change was the actual label imprint. I believe the first 500 pressings still

had 'Eric's Factory' on them.

