

2007 - Year in Review

Contributed by Administrator
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What a year 2007 was for The Hedrons. Right now, we're into the second week of January nursing full bellies after the Christmas gluttony, muddling through dark mornings and dark afternoons hoping another tour in the sunshine looms. I thought now would be a good time, therefore, to reflect on how great 2007 was for the band and remember all those classic moments on the road.

January 2007 was a bit of a false start for us. The third single was hitting the shops midway through the month, and we were about to embark on a massive tour of the UK without a bass player. The original bass player was put out of action with a neck injury. We were left with two weeks to find someone new, who would learn the album in one week and then hit the road to continue the cause. Stressful? No, not at all. Stressful is when you're trapped in the kitchens of a gig somewhere in America wondering why the Tour Manager hasn't come back for you, wishing you hadn't wound him up all day. De-stressing is when you find the cupboard where the drink tokens for the bar are kept. Stress for the Tour Manager who does come back to rescue you but has to carry the band back to bus. Hee hee hee.

Anyway, we succeeded in recruiting a new bass player via MySpace, and not just any old bass player: Gill "The Spill" Hedron, who would become my new ally in the war against bath nights, early nights, and Tour Manager fights. Yes, Gill's a blessing really. I'm ignoring the fact that she did learn the album in a week, handed her P45 in, and hit the road with a rock and roll band before she could say; "Are the straighteners on?!?". The important thing is she likes to have a laugh and fits the mould perfectly.

So we embarked on the toilet tour of the UK, trundling up and down the M6 in the trusty splitter bus. The trips between Travelodges and gigs in such a tight space meant that we got to know our newest addition very quickly. She even brought a karaoke DVD for the bus which meant we could sing between the gig and hotel at 2 a.m., beers in hand, annoying the hell out of Frank, the Tour Manager. We'd pull in for petrol and the bus would rock side to side at the pump as Shania Twain belted out. You'd have thought the hen night form hell were aboard. Not far from the truth!

Once Gill's initiation was complete, it was time for the harsh realities of being in a band to hit home. Never mind the fact we're always skint and will actually hunt down the band member that didn't produce your 30p change after they were sent into the services to buy you a tea; I'm talking about the in-stores. One week doing the FOPP tour in February was, how do I put it? Character building!

The bus would pull up behind grim loading areas of shopping centres up and down the country twice a day and the gear loaded onto huge cages that always had a life of their own. We'd struggle into the huge goods lifts and make our way to the back door of the FOPP record shops. There's an art in carting a drum kit past a rack of CDs and not knocking them over and avoiding the bum of the unsuspecting shopper hunched over a row of ZZ Top CDs (always the bottom shelf—always a hazard).

So there we were, touting our album, herded into the smallest corner of the shop playing our music to toddlers and pensioners—the only people who seem to be around between the hours of 9 and 5. The toddlers cried and the pensioners couldn't hear us because their hearing aids were on the wrong channel. Disaster. I'm being awfully downbeat about this, the tour of the record shops was a success in that we did manage to pull some crowds. It was the playing gigs under a blazing florescent bulb that was really the problem. No atmosphere.

After the FOPP tour, it was time to go home for a couple of weeks at the end of February. We were starting to get really excited by the fact that we'd been invited to play at SXSW in Texas in March. I, for one, had never even been to America before, so to get the chance to go and play gigs with my three pals was just a dream come true.

It was about the second week in March when we left Glasgow to fly straight to Toronto to do some gigs at Canadian Music Week. I just remember being like a coiled spring on the plane on the way out of Glasgow, so excited about what lay ahead. The tour was arranged to take up the whole month of March so I knew that all sorts of mischief and stories lay ahead.

Toronto was a strange place to me at first. I didn't take to it really until we visited it for a second time later in the year. When we arrived, the snow was piled up high alongside the pavement and it was so cold I thought my nose might fall off. We spent most of our days there hanging out at the Convention Centre for the festival, making pests of ourselves handing out flyers to music-industry people who were from I don't know where. The plan was to promote the band and get in everyone's face—something that we are good at. We noticed that we were the only band out of the hundreds performing that had the gumption to actually turn up at this place where all the lectures and meetings were being held with the people who actually make or break bands in attendance. It was noted by them, too. We did meet the odd disgruntled delegate. I remember it distinctly. I signalled to the girls that a meeting was about to begin in a particular room and that all the delegates would soon be walking in to take their seats so we stood at the door, me on one side and Tippi on the other. Gill and Rosie would infiltrate any strays wandering the corridors and make themselves known. We really will do whatever it takes. Hell mend anyone who gets in the way of our drive when we are on a mission to sell ourselves. We'd hand them all a flyer as they walked past and ask them to come to our gig that night. It takes balls to do this but once you get into it, it becomes quite easy and you can have a good laugh with some folk. I said to one man; "Hi, we're The Hedrons. Why don't you come to our show tonight at the Big Bop?" to which he replied cheekily; "Oh yeah? Why should I do that?" to which I replied; "Why not?" That was the end of that. He didn't have answer and looked like a crabbit idiot next to all the other people who would engage us in conversation and ask about the band. I seem to remember a few champagnes later tracking the guy down and slapping a Hedrons sticker on his coat. He ended up walking around all day advertising the band without realising. Sucker! By the end of the day, there wasn't one person at that event who didn't know who The Hedrons were. The gigs at the festival were rammed with people who queued to see us outside in the freezing cold—people who'd met us at the Convention Centre. Job done!

With Toronto well and truly savaged by The 'drons, it was time to catch a flight to New York. I'm starting to talk like an actual rock star. Don't worry, that's as grand as the talk gets. We're still residing in the Red Rash Inns on tour. Feet firmly on ground.

I think Rosie had just started to eat by the time we caught this flight. I omitted to mention earlier that she's so scared of flying that she doesn't eat two days before a flight so this trip was to prove a challenge for her. So, just as she was getting her appetite back, another flight. No wonder she's a skelf of a girl who can survive on chocolate as a staple diet.

I seem to remember the plane to New York was much like a coke can. A small plane in which we were tossed about like a Caesar salad. My best memory is seeing the Manhattan skyline as we came into land. It was just like it is in the films! I remember saying to Gill; "Right when we get there, we'll crash out for a couple of hours and then we'll hit the town." She was in total agreement. On arrival, plans changed. We got to the airport and I was just in awe of everything. Mainly the accents! It was surreal to me. A big bus/truck thing picked us up at the airport and took us to Soho where we were staying. We were mesmerised by everything. The most amusing part of the journey was the patter from the driver. He was shouting and bawling at every other road user. He took no prisoners and I really thought his mental driving was going to kill us all. I remember being excited the first time I saw a yellow cab! Sad really, isn't it!

We got to the hotel and sleep was the last thing on my mind. We checked the bags in and I took to my heels off down Spring Street onto Broadway. I was on my own but I was bursting with so much excitement that I had to speak to someone, so I bought a phone card to phone home. My hands were shaking so much and I couldn't concentrate on the instructions so I failed to make the call about four times and gave up. I just wanted to phone home and say, "I'M ON BROADWAY!" I spent the rest of the afternoon walking around mainly looking upwards at the height of the buildings. I find it difficult explaining to people what New York is like. It's hard to get across the atmosphere in the streets, the madness of the place. I love everything about it, and knew from that moment it would be my favourite city. That was even before I tried a pizza slice. My word, there's nothing like it!

I got back to the hotel and convened with the girls, some of whom had gone for a sleep. How could they do that?!? We headed out for dinner with Frank and Dougie, our manager (he asks that we don't call him Dad in public—same father, different mothers). Afterwards, myself, Gill, and Dougie hit the town, met a Scottish guy who ran a pub, got free drinks all night, and rolled in at four in the morning. I can't remember if that was the same night out that led to me waking up in the morning fully dressed, Converse laced up on top of the neatly made bed. I walked past Rosie who was just waking up. She thought I was up and showered! Hahaha! I'd only been in bed for two hours and was wearing yesterday's gear! Oh dear. New York is wonderful. That particular morning, I remember we had to drive somewhere for hours which should have been a horrendous concept but I was still fleeing and was too busy to notice any hangover. I call that a result!

The gigs we played in New York were absolutely brilliant. We'd been warned that the crowds wouldn't be unlike the London crowds—a bit standoffish. We found they were a bit like that at the start of the set but once they got over the fact that four lassies can actually play (shock, horror) they were dancing on the spot without a hair moving out of place, clutching their cocktail glass with cherry on the side. That's how they do it in NY. The indie crowd are too cool for school. God love them. To get this mob into our music is very important to us, though so we really pulled out all the stops and made sure they got a performance. We wanted them to go home and tell all their friends about us. I think some of them went home and cried to their mummies it was so good. We played two gigs, The Knitting Factory and Galapagos. Both were great performances with Tippi pulling down a huge curtain that hung behind the bar in The Knitting Factory as she danced along the beer taps. That raised a few eyebrows in this fashionable venue. We made our mark.

There are many stories from New York, and mostly end in a similar fashion. Gig, club, sleep. Good times and good memories there.

Just as I was thinking things couldn't get any better it was time to set off to SXSW in Texas. I remember actually forgetting we still had that to do because I was having such a great time in New York. So, off we went to a hotter climate for more hilarity, gigs, and getting in people's faces. What a job!

We boarded another coke can and headed for the land of the cowboy. It was very different from New York. A lot more spread out, really laid-back atmosphere, and dusty, I thought! The sun was blazing, though. We'd come from freezing temperatures in New York to the hot Texan sun and BBQs! It was strange having to pack a case with winter and summer clothes.

The first day at SXSW was hectic. There was a lot of hanging about at another convention centre where we had to queue for ages to register and get the relevant wrist bands. We were only going to be there for two days and fit in four shows, so it was a busy time. Every gig was like a showcase as this festival is really only for people in the music industry. They travel there every year from all over the world. It was important for us to be there and play to people who had heard our

name, seen the reviews, and maybe heard the music. This was our chance to let them see the full force of The Hedrons. We played at Alan McGee's Poptones party in the blazing heat—our whiter than white Scottish skin reflecting the sun. There were a few sunburn casualties that day. I seem to remember Dougie producing a tube of factor 45 sun block every five minutes insisting we wear it, preaching his, "musicians shouldn't looked tanned" mantra. Well, I'm sorry, but this was the closest we were getting to a holiday, and we were not going back to Scotland looking even more blue than we did already. Sleeves were rolled up and flesh bared!

Overall, SXSW was a real success. All of the shows were packed with people outside the venues pressing their noses up against the windows trying to catch a glimpse of the action. It was so busy they had to stop people from going in. The last show was mental! People were taking pictures of us play through the windows as they couldn't get in! It was a great buzz to see so many people crammed in. We were exhausted by the end of the four gigs because not only were we doing two really high-energy shows a day but in between we were doing interviews or out in the streets marketing ourselves—handing out flyers, turning on the charm, getting people to come and see us. The festival is so big that competition is tough and schedules are tight, so to get people to come and see your show at a set time is a real challenge. With four of us on the case, though, we did well and even had time to catch some acts ourselves in the evening. We bumped into Joan Jett and duly climbed aboard her tour bus where we shared a beer and chewed the fat. We'd been watching her perform with the Blackhearts and met her as she was preparing to leave the venue. Cool lady, and looked like she'd fit right into The Hedrons' line up. We could maybe put her on keys. We also saw Rikki Lee Jones perform. Albeit she was a wee bit impatient with people chatting in the crowd so when she stopped moaning and actually sang, she was excellent. That was a pretty good night. I had originally intended to go and see Iggy Pop and the Stooges but the queue was stretching round four blocks, so there was no way it was going to happen. We conceded defeat there but did catch a glimpse of Iggy at the airport when we flew out to California after the festival. I was absolutely livid when I realised he'd been sitting 20 metres away from us, waiting to board his flight! No VIP section in the lounge either! He must've been there for about two hours and we didn't spot him until we were being herded onto the plane. How disappointing. Oh well, we'll see him when he supports us this year!

So by now we were midway through March and about to embark on the last leg of the tour. We had 11 days touring California ahead of us. March really was a whirlwind of a month. So many new places to experience, new people to meet, countless interviews, and parties to attend! It was overwhelming at times and we were absolutely knackered. I remember Gill and I started to get a cold when we got to California, I think we were quite run down by that point! Too many late nights and early rises. Sod it, we thought. Life's too short to worry about how much sleep you're getting. There was too much going on to slow down!

The tour of California saw us play about 10 shows and the major venues on Sunset Strip; namely the Key Club and The Roxy. Wow! These are places that I read about and there we were, setting up our gear on stages that have been graced by the people we look up to. The Velvet Underground, Bowie, and The Rolling Stones—they've either played there or hung out there to watch other bands back in the 60s. What a time that must've been to play in a band. I think I was born in the wrong decade! We played some real dives, too, but that's all part of the experience. There was one occasion where Frank actually had to abandon the sound desk and come to the front of stage and brandish a mic stand to keep the locals back from the front line (that's Tippi, Rosie, and Gill). We were in some town in the back of beyond playing to a bunch of rednecks who were practically foaming at the mouth watching us play. If you imagine Johnny Cash playing in a prison but turning up with an all female backing band . . . it was a bit like that. They would surge forward and the bravest of the pack would try and clutch at a piece of flesh. Thank God I sit at the back. There were a couple of occasions where I thought we might have to run for the side door. We made it through the set and we were leered at as we packed up our gear. We were practically pushed up against the walls as we signed autographs on the posters they tore down. Frank got the engine running and we made our escape, each slipping away one by one so they wouldn't really notice the mass exodus! Another piece in the character-building exercise that is The Hedrons!

So, we only had a couple of days left in California and we were gearing up for going home when a couple of really exciting things happened. We'd been working our asses off non stop and we finally had a day of rest when we got an invite to Warner Bros. Studios. Someone who knows someone who knows someone else had heard we were in LA and invited us along for a VIP tour! Suddenly the tiredness disappeared and off we went, totally unprepared for the events that would follow. I'm always telling the other three that they shouldn't go over the door on tour without their face on

because unexpected things happen and you end up having an interview to do at the last minute. Before you know it, your boat race is captured in its true, grim glory for all to see on the Internet forever more. Well, they listen now after what happened!

We took a donner about the studios which was the strangest thing. We wandered round the set of ER, bounced on a few patient beds, touched things we weren't supposed to touch, wowed at the ambulances, and sat in the waiting room. It was weird! We were on the set of a few shows we didn't get in the UK at the time but have just started to air now. The main one I'm thinking of was Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip. We took a look round but we had to be really quiet as they were filming a scene. We stood just off camera between takes, the four of us standing in a row when a familiar voice shouted from behind us; "Hey! Can I be in your band?!" The guy who had shouted then pushed his way through our group and we got a look at him. There was a collective gasp as it dawned on every one of us, the identity of this person. IT WAS CHANDLER BING! Not only that but he was talking to us! We didn't even look good, with a poor hair and makeup effort all round! I'd like to point out here that this is the first time any one of us has ever been star struck. It's the only time I can remember us being silent for more than three minutes, which, believe me, is a long time. Trying not to look like four daft wee girls, we tried to speak but what do you talk about with the superstar that is Chandler Bing?! Then, of course, he realised we were Scottish so immediately the barriers were broken. He had a Scottish granny—surprise, surprise—so we were one big happy family. He was lovely, though, and he let us stay to watch him film that particular scene. Once he was done, he posed for a couple of pictures and promptly pocketed one of our CDs and passed another to the producer in the hope that we could film for the next episode (apparently, they have a band every week incorporated into the show somehow). Well, we went back to the hotel totally hyper, phoning and e-mailing our news back home. We then got the second piece of good news which made the day all too much really! We were asked to take part in Tartan Fashion Week in New York in about three days' time! This meant extending the trip by another week and finishing in New York—the greatest city in the world! The only problem was that by then we were offered a chance to film for Studio 60 that we had to turn down, since we'd already agreed to do Tartan Fashion Week. Unbelievable! Too many good things happening at once—can that be possible? Well, we made the contacts at the studios. That's the important thing.

So, after the madness of LA, and I've had to cut most of it out or this will be a novel, we boarded another plane and headed for our New York engagement. To make the whole Tartan Week thing worthwhile, we managed to get another couple of bookings too. Work work work! We're daren't complain, though. Has to be done. At least no one can accuse us of being lazy!

Parading around on a catwalk was strange for us. We made sure that we kept within the rock and roll realm as much as possible, wearing our skinny jeans, tartan cons, and solitaire t-shirts. Donald Trump was there—I saw his hair before I saw him—and Tippi gave him a sticker. She should've asked him where his troosers were. Actually, she should've kept him talking and dipped his pockets. Small change in that guy's trousers would pay for us to tour a lifetime. We used the situation to our advantage though as there were many business people milling around and we networked like mad. There's no sitting in the dressing room hiding in a corner with this outfit. We get out there and make our presence known. Isn't that how you get to where you want to be? This is where we met Mr. Silverjet, the owner of the Silverjet airline. He was due to take to the runway behind us (not the type of runway he's used to), so we got chatting in the corridors backstage as we waited in line. We must've made an impression because he sponsored the flights for our next trip to America. Now that's generosity! This is no ordinary airline, either. Every seat on the plane is First Class and you are waited on hand and foot by the amazing staff. That's where good networking gets you so it pays to be a sociable bunch!

After more gigs in New York and more madness on the time off it was time to go home. It was now the second week in April and we were done in. I had just managed to get over a horrendous throat and a mouth infection. My lips were bigger than Mick Jagger's and my throat was full of yellow and white lumps but once the doctor came out to the hotel and prescribed the tablets, I was back out on the town. Although I had great fun, a wee lesson was learned in enjoying oneself too much. I don't recall any other tours being quite as mad as that but, hey, it was New York, and it was a first visit. I'm excused.

The rest of the year consisted of a tour of Germany, Ireland, and another two trips to America and many many festivals. I'll not go into the details of those trips because I wrote separate blogs on them at the time that you can still see on our MySpace and Bebo sites. You've probably had enough of my ramblings anyway and I don't want to overstay my welcome!

The tour of Germany was quite successful, so we'll probably be back there at some point to pick up where we left off. At the time we toured with two bands that are now huge back in the UK, which, if I'm brutally honest, really gets me down. You see, these bands have never worked half as hard as us and seem to slip right into the mainstream effortlessly without really doing anything extraordinary. We've seen it happen a million times—bands with huge teams of people behind them and coffers that never seem to drain. Now, don't take this as bitterness, I suppose there's maybe a little jealousy but it really makes me think about the credibility of new bands and what the charts have become. It's just so disheartening when you're constantly touring and putting on full-energy shows every night and always just on the outskirts of success. We keep reading comments on YouTube and the like that say, "Why are more people not talking about this band?" I have no idea. We can only try our best, I suppose. Surely at some point the constant touring has to count for something.

We have a great time doing what we're doing. Sometimes there are down moments when we have to remind ourselves why we're doing it. Picture the scene—we've just played another toilet, huddled in the back of the van as we fire through motorways in the dead of night in the pouring rain. We put up with the tiredness, the smelly feet, and the suspicious scents from the front of the van. We do it because we are so passionate about it. We play a gig not because we have to but because we want to.

Yes, it's frustrating sometimes but we have to think about all the things we've achieved with our small hardworking team and our tiny budget. We might not have the backing of a major label but there's double the enthusiasm and effort than there is at a major label. We believe if you want something badly enough and you put the work in, you'll get it.

I just think about the time we played the Isle of Wight festival opening the stage the Rolling Stones closed and think of Tippi "the Sparra" taking flight down Mick Jagger's out of bounds runway and smile. You can take The Hedrons out of Glasgow but you can't take Glasgow out The Hedrons.

Onwards and Upwards!

Soup x