

There's a story behind the Lene Lovich Band...

In 1992, Jude Rawlins, twenty-year-old singer/guitarist with recently formed English artrock band Subterraneans, crosses paths in the Netherlands with cult German punk queen Nina Hagen. During their brief acquaintance Jude attempts to play Nina an album by another German singer, Henry Cow's Dagmar Krause. It is an album of Kurt Weill songs sung in English. Nina dismisses it with the words "Lene Lovich would do that so much better..."

A decade or so later, Jude and Lene meet very briefly for the first time at a screening of Vicky Hopkins' film *Alpha Girls* at a gallery in Bethnal Green, East London. Jude had intended to give Lene a copy of the latest Subterraneans album, but accidentally left it on the Tube.

Another decade passes. It is November 2011, and Subterraneans are exhausted following the recent release of their ninth album. During the same period Lene has released only one album, *Shadows and Dust* in 2004. Her profile is, to say the very least, low. Meanwhile Jude is jaded with the law of diminishing returns, and watching everything he has worked so hard for being devalued by corporate entities that have no idea how much a song is worth to the hearts and minds that created it, and so sell it for a flat rate of 79pence. Sometimes less.

Thus ends the prelude. Now begins Chapter One...

Jude receives a message from a friend who is planning a free jazz re-imagining of the songs of Kurt Weill. It's a tour. He wants someone unexpected, someone with some post-punk edge to front it. And for some reason, of all the people he knows, Jude is the person he asks: "Can YOU think of anybody?"

Jude thinks. He remembers Dagmar Krause. Then he remembers Nina's comment. And he says "What about Lene Lovich? If you can find her..."

The suggestion goes down very well. And so the search begins.

On Sunday 8th April 2012 Subterraneans play a 20th anniversary show in London. There are no further plans to tour, and there is a rumour going around that this may be their final show. The next day is Jude's 40th birthday and the day the band releases its tenth album. Feeling this a good place to pause and evaluate, Jude's diary is empty for the first time in twenty years. Amongst the birthday messages in his inbox this morning, is the message "Found Lene Lovich. She doing Weill tour. Thinks we need another singer. Are you available?"

A few weeks later, after a few phone calls, mostly on the subject of Kurt Weill, and the fact that neither of them particularly likes jazz, Lene Lovich and Jude Rawlins meet for the second time on the platform of a village station on the outskirts of Cambridge. This meeting is considerably more significant. This time they are looking for common ground, and they find it almost instantly. Lene tells Jude that she has been invited to perform at the Drop Dead Festival in Berlin in November, but she doesn't have a backing band. Subterraneans are very well connected in Berlin, and the possibility of their providing the backing is mooted. But understanding that such an event would logistically be a one-off, the idea is put on hold and attention turns to the Kurt Weill tour.

The Kurt Weill tour doesn't go well. Despite Detroit garage legend John Sinclair providing much needed poetic relief, Lene and Jude struggle to illicit any useable musical empathy from the seasoned jazz musos. With the tour reduced to just three shows, it will be over almost as soon as it has begun. Lene and Jude sit at the back of the tour bus as if at the back of the class, no doubt throwing metaphorical paper aeroplanes. It's obvious that Lene's presence on the tour is the major attraction, and Jude is painfully aware that what people want is Lene Lovich being Lene Lovich, not Lene-sings-Kurt-when-the-jazz-boys-let-her. Meanwhile, Lene gets to witness Jude's cool-under-fire problem solving abilities on the road. Learning that he has kept a band working both live and in the studio for twenty years with pretty much no support from the music industry is also a revelation to her. Eventually their attention wanes from Kurt Weill and turns to the future. Jude has no plans. Lene has no plans, but an offer to perform in Berlin. Jude thinks she needs a band. Lene thinks she needs a band, but feels she might not have the means to put one together. Jude puts it to her that it would be the same amount of work to rehearse a full set of her material with a completely new band as it would with Subterraneans, but that a completely new band would be *her* band, it would have a life beyond one show.

And so the Lene Lovich Band was born out of luck or chance, or some otherworldly design, both celebrating the past and firmly drawing a line under it. The accolades that followed them around Europe for the next two years are a matter of record, and the brilliance of their live performances is not contested anywhere. Just try to find a bad review online. We can't. And in as testament to the universe's will to have it's way with this band, we part with this little epilogue: Last Christmas Jude was visiting his mum and found a box of records in the bottom of the wardrobe. The Dagmar Krause album was in there. It is called *Tank Battles*, and isn't an album of Kurt Weill songs at all, but of Hans Eisler songs. Jude simply remembered it wrong. On such mistakes this world turns.