

Time Travel (2012)

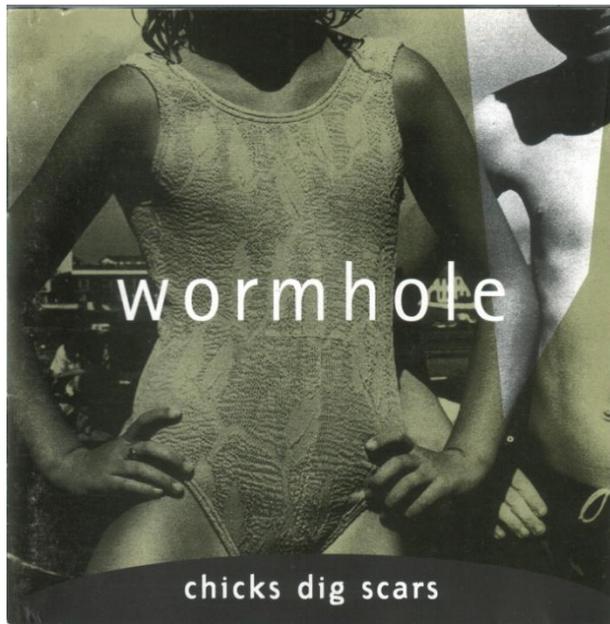
by Stephen Rennicks

Once a record, CD, DVD or book - or any type of product for that matter - goes out of press or print and its stock is exhausted, it enters a nebulous and eternal secondary market made up of various types of shops and individuals who trade in secondhand goods. They take over from the label or publisher and make it available again to the consumer in a more limited but always evolving fashion. There is of course no longer any chance for the object to recoup anymore money for the label or publisher once this decision has been taken and no further royalties can be accrued from it for the band or writer. It can however become a cult item and may even be officially reissued if it succeeds in this market place over time.

Most of my life I have been a keen buyer from and explorer of this market of the past and have spent countless hours in charity shops, second hand sections of book and record stores and looking at lists of online and private traders. I often found good value and discovered many forgotten or overlooked gems in the process. These places are ever changing archives (where the download has no currency), as our own collections are too, full of fragments of our lives, each piece a memory. I decided I wanted to see if by using this market I could track down certain artifacts, which could stand for any, which I still feel a deep connection with.

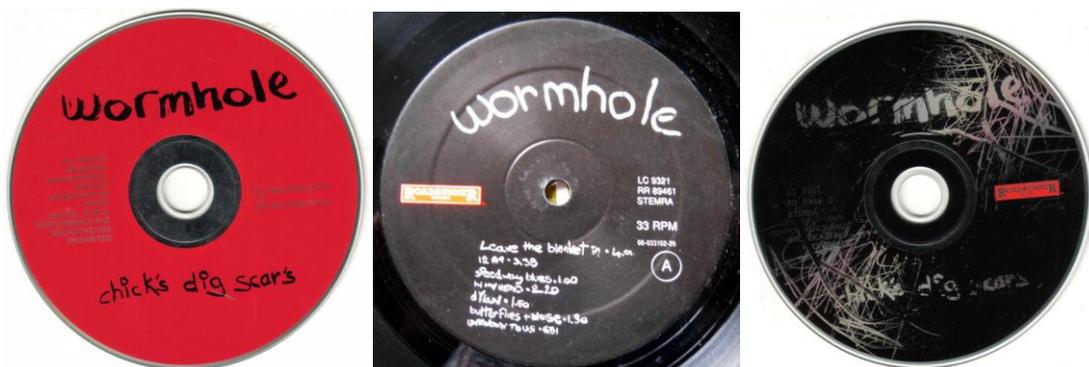
In Dublin in 1993 I became friendly with the members of the Dublin group Wormhole. They were Graham Blackmore on guitar/vocals, Dave Carroll on Drums/vocals and his twin brother Anthony on bass. To this day I remain friends with the Carroll brothers. In 1994 they released their debut album, *Chicks Dig Scars*, on local independent label, Dead Elvis, which was run by their manager of the time, Eamonn Crudden. There were just 500 CD's pressed of this edition and I bought mine for 5 punts from Eamonn who took my copy from a plastic bag of them he had and handed it to me in a club one night. For this price I also gained entry to their launch gig later that week. This must have

been within days of its manufacture in what was then primarily a newly opened CD Rom pressing plant in Dublin called Sonopress. At the time this was an important first in Irish music when lots of unsigned bands and small labels could finally release albums more economically.

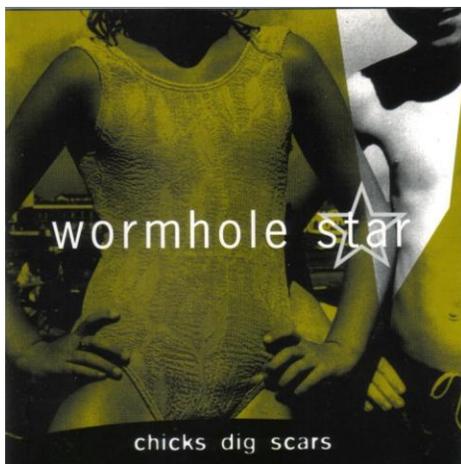


For me there has always been something about that artifact and its exchange and the music itself which has continued to give me so much more than my monies worth over the years. I was 22 at the time and I played it over and over during a long and impressionable period of my life. This was my friends chance to live out their dreams and in a way my own. When I listen to it now I can literally time travel in my mind to those days, which is very fitting considering the name of the group.

Within a few months of this the band were signed to a worldwide deal with one of the biggest independent record labels in the world at the time, Roadrunner Records. This label saw such huge potential in the album that they would reissue it themselves after promoting it with two singles from it. The version of the album that they would release in 1995 would have some changes made to it by the label and the band themselves with the audio being re-mastered and one of the tracks, '12am', being rerecorded and the secret track from the end of the album being removed. They had CD and vinyl copies manufactured and distributed in Ireland, the UK and Europe and sent them off on their second tour of the UK. Around this time I bought a copy on vinyl from Comet Records in the heart of Dublin's Temple Bar. It was the first time I had ever bought another edition of an album I already owned but it was great to see my favourite Irish band and this album in particular on vinyl. I would guess it cost me at least twice what I had paid for it before.



In America it turned out there was another band trading under the same name so they were to be known as Wormhole Star in that territory and another CD was put into production and released and distributed by the US arm of Roadrunner based in New York. The people in the office there reportedly loved this record and it is said to have sold reasonably well considering the band never got to tour there. In Japan there was no such problem with the name and it was licensed in this territory to a company called Apollon International who would issue it there on CD only as well in 1996.



As good as many thought the album was it never really got off the ground and is said to have not sold enough copies to recoup what had been spent on the band by the label so far. It's a subjective thing of course but I still like it and think it is something of a lost classic. In 1996, not long after some demos for a follow up album were rejected by the label, they were dropped and all production and promotion of the group and their music would cease. The group would go on to produce 2 more albums on different labels and various other releases over the years until they finally stopped in 1999. See discography at base of article for details.

By now over 15 years had gone by with *Chicks Dig Scars* well and truly lost and found in the various secondary markets of the world and I often did wonder how easy it would be to find all 5 editions. I already still had 2 of them (although I could have found these as well if I'd had to) so that was a start but it wasn't until Dave Carroll's girlfriend managed to track down the Japanese version on Ebay (which even the band had never seen before) that I really thought it was possible and could even be approached as some kind of art project as well. What would happen if I put all 5 editions in one place, I doubted it had ever been done before, would a real wormhole open perhaps? I had to try.



It took me a few months before I found the Japanese version myself, also on Ebay. I got it from someone called Yoshi for about 15 euro including postage. It struck me that whoever this was had just made more money on the album than the label had. Including the cut that Ebay takes, PayPal's cut and the postage costs, commerce was still being created around this obsolete disc, not to mention its growing carbon footprint. The current price was reasonable I felt and not bad inflation for the time involved. My post woman, Ciara, dropped it into my letter box and as nothing else arrived with it that day it began to dawn on me that it had taken quite a network of people to get this commercial failure of a CD to me. I was intrigued by all the subtle differences to the artwork which also included its own unique OBI cover strip with Japanese writing and pricing. It also now came with an English lyric book with Japanese translation. Previously none of the versions had contained a lyric sheet so I presume someone there had to orally decipher and translate them for this market which places such an emphasis on language. The only other major and I think significant difference between the original and all the Roadrunner versions was that the cover image got a lot darker, with much of the detail being lost, a shame.

I had known that finding the Japanese version would be the toughest but now that I had I only had two to go. It was then that I was surprised to discover that they and the album have become so unknown and undervalued as to be worth just 1 cent from certain Amazon trading affiliates. Perhaps my efforts here will at the very least give some context for the group and their album again. I purchased one of these bargain copies from a UK company I use a lot called Zoverstocks which is based in Gurnsey. I expected it to be the UK/Europe CD edition but when it arrived it was actually the original on Dead Elvis. This was very unlikely but I decided to keep it as a spare and eventually sold it myself for twice the price on Discogs.com (another great source for secondhand and out of press music) and therefore I too have now made more money on the album than the label. I then tried again by ordering it from a dealer in Germany for 30 cent through Amazon and a week later the standard Roadrunner UK/European CD edition duly arrived by Ciara's fair hand. For my last copy I tried JukeboxUSA , another Amazon affiliate, who were also selling it for 1 cent. I presumed that this would have to be the US edition under Wormhole Star and luckily when it finally arrived it was. All these copies cost me around 3 euro each including postage and I bought them with my credit card.

Again, with the dealers profit, Amazon's percentage, the postage costs, my credit card companies cut for currency charges and all those air miles and people involved I was amazed at how much commerce and industry was still surrounding these objects and absolutely will continue to do so as they and others are traded into the future.

Nothing significant did happen (yet) to space and time once I lined them all up but there was a sense of achievement, time and something personal being laid to rest for me as well. I hope to get to display these objects with this story sometime and that maybe a few more people might discover this album for themselves. If you are interested in attaining this work for yourself the nice thing is you can create it yourself the same way I did or find something important to you and see what traces of it you can still locate and find out how that might make you feel.

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I have written about Wormhole and their history before and this can be read at this link.
<http://ringsendblues.webs.com/thewormholes.htm>

Wormhole Discography

Chicks Dig Scars CD album (Dead Elvis 1994)

Lay It On EP CD/10" (Roadrunner 1995)

Chopper EP CD/10" (Roadrunner 1995)

Chicks Dig Scars LP/CD (Roadrunner 1995)

Chicks Dig Scars CD (Apollon International 1996)

As Wormhole Star *Chicks Dig Scars* CD (Roadrunner US 1995)

As The Wormholes *Scorpio: The Album* CD (Chunkin' Bronchii 1997)

Parijuana CD album (Dead Elvis 1999)

Seven Point Plan to Destroy Astrology w/Richard Thomas CD album (Lo Recordings 1999)

Of Your Mind 12" (Lo Recordings 1999)

Dave and Anthony Carroll are currently members of E+S=B